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LETTERS

FROM THE

NORTH OF ITALY.

VOL. I.

LETTERS

FROM THE

NORTH OF ITALY.

ADDRESSED TO

HENRY HALLAM, Esq.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

X. e-10 —— 84671 ai

With discourse that shifts and changes,
That at random roves and ranges,
Hither, thither, here and there,
Over ocean, earth and air;
To the pole and to the tropic,
Overrunning every topic—
—Tell us, is he drunk or mad?
—No, believe me, grave and sad.

THE BIRDS, *MS. Translation.*

VOL. I.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1819.

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INTRODUCTION.

Some sort of preface or introduction is considered as so essential to a book that I have not courage to depart from the established usage. Yet in thinking upon what I have to say, every subject which I might touch, with one exception, appears to me either unnecessary or impertinent.

The single point I reserve is an explanation of the false colours under which I have embarked: For it would be disingenuous to pretend that the following letters were not originally designed for publication. My reason for wrapping my matter in the form in which they appear, was simply that being little accustomed to habits of serious literary composition, and still less fitted for attempting a *falsetto*, I sought an excuse for writing as I should speak,

were it unfortunately the fashion to speak octavos.

Having thus candidly confessed what the reader is probably already acquainted with, I shall make my fairness a ground for claiming his confidence in another declaration which makes more essentially for my work

It appears to me to matter less, whether letters of the description of those which follow were originally designed only for private inspection or the public eye, than whether they are such as they were originally struck off, or have been retouched from after-recollection. Now upon the first ground I can take my stand, (indeed the letters themselves will probably afford sufficient evidence of this,) and declare that, excepting two or three, I have left them as I cast them, having bestowed no more alteration on them in their progress through the press than what I suppose every one naturally and almost unwittingly makes, in reviewing a private letter.

W. S. R.

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LETTERS

FROM THE

NORTH OF ITALY.

LETTER I.

The Simplon—Arrangements made by Buonaparte for the safety and comfort of Travellers—neglected by his Successors, &c.—Entrance into Italy.

Genoa, Aug. 1817.

DEAR HALLAM,

You, who know the line of march I had determined on, will be surprized at the date of this letter; but all will be explained in its proper place. In the mean time, I follow the good precept of beginning at the beginning.

My carriage, which had been warranted roadworthy, having nearly gone to pieces before I reached Paris, I determined to sell it there for what I could get, and to proceed, by the *voiturier*, to the baths of *Abano*, near Padua, my ultimate destination.

This mode of travelling, though tedious, is that which bids fairest to gratify curiosity in an interesting country. You journey leisurely enough to see whatever is worth seeing; and as the *voituriers* take care that you shall arrive at the hours of the *tables d'hôte*, where such are kept, you see more of manners, than you can travelling in any other mode.

You will imagine, perhaps, that these advantages are dearly purchased by other sacrifices. I assure you it is not so. I have traversed a great part of the continent in both ways, and have found that I was usually better fed, and better served with the *voiturier*, than when travelling post.

The reason is obvious: move with what magnificence you may, the innkeeper cares little for conciliating a person whom he never expects to see again. On the other hand, he is very desirous of satisfying the *voiturier*, and, through him, the whole cast, who are, some or other of them, continually repacing the same roads. The *voiturier*, on his part, is anxious to see justice done to his travellers, because the extent of the voluntary present which they make him, is generally regulated by the treatment they receive; and he is anxious to obtain from them a testimonial to his good conduct, to which, if

they are English, he attaches very considerable importance. He contracts (unless you choose to vary the mode of bargain) to lodge, feed, and deliver you (giving you one meal in twenty-four hours) at the place of your destination, on a given day. Thus I contracted to be delivered at Padua twenty-one days after leaving Paris, and should have been so, but for an accident, which I shall shortly relate; for, to my infinite astonishment, I crossed the Simplon, a mountain which, in its ascent and descent, contains nearly fifty Italian miles of road, in a day, though we had only three permanent mules, and a vile single provisional horse, for our ascent; so that you see even the tediousness of this mode of travelling is exaggerated.

My *voiturier*, or muleteer, was a Florentine, for Florence is a prolific parent of men of this description, and was worthy of occupying a place in one of the novels of Le Sage. It may be remarked that the Florentine muleteers are to be preferred, as being almost always active, steady and civilized.

But having described the nature of my ark, (in which you may sometimes moreover meet with very curious animals,) it is time to bring it to the top of the mountains.

Though I shall not attempt to make you dizzy by tales of precipices,

> Where Nature loves to sit alone,
> Majestic on a craggy throne;

save where her solitude is broken in upon, at the hazard of her neck, by the jingle of the muleteer's bells, I cannot help digressing, to mention a proof which I received here that terror is not a source of the sublime. There is indeed no real cause for terror in passing the Simplon; but it is impossible to look down from the carriage, almost grazing the brinks of precipices, often unfurnished with the slightest protection, without experiencing something which comes near it. On one or two of these occasions, I have got out for the purpose of re-observing points of view which I had passed, and found myself wrapt in pleasure at the contemplation of scenes which had previously made a painful impression. This confirms me in the idea I always entertained, that it is not terror, but a certain approach to it, which is one source of the sublime.

The mode in which we are affected on these occasions may perhaps be explained in the same way by which we explain the effects of tragedy. A moderate excitement of the passions is pleasing, while an intense one is productive of pain.

But I am straying into the devious paths of metaphysics, with a beaten road before me; it will not however be deviating much from this, (since their *Hospice* is within a few yards of it,) to make some mention of the monks and dogs of St. Bernard, who occupy a detached post upon this mountain. You will hear with pleasure, that the race of these useful beasts (I mean the dogs) is not, as I had understood in England, extinguished; there existing a fine race of puppies, who, literally speaking, promise to tread in the steps of their progenitors.

The merits of these, though in themselves sufficiently great, have however been much exaggerated. They neither carry provisions to the strayed, nor go, unaccompanied, in search of those buried in the snow. But they are endowed, as it should appear, with a very extraordinary instinct, which enables them to distinguish the solid path, though covered with snow, where the deviation of a step might plunge their followers into an abyss. They are, therefore, to be considered as the guides of the mountain, and it was in the discharge of this duty that the most experienced of the tribe found their grave. A courier, who was passing the St. Bernard, stopped at the convent for shelter, and, after a short stay, insisted on proceeding. As the weather

was dangerous, the good monks all but knelt to him, to divert him from his purpose: but he was an old stager, and was obstinate. They, therefore, did all they could for his protection, and furnished him with three men and three dogs for guides, these three dogs being the only ones fit for service, the rest of the family consisting of two bitches who gave suck. The party had not proceeded far, when they were overwhelmed by an *avalanche*, and, to complete the catastrophe, the courier's brother and brother-in law, who had come out to meet and assist him, were buried in another, on the opposite side of the mountain.

To return to the dogs.—Though they do not proceed alone to disinter the buried, they do indeed, by scratching, indicate where they are to be found; but most dogs, and particularly our sheep dogs, will do the like to carcasses of any animal, covered by the snow.

The utility of the convent of St. Bernard, in the situation in which it is placed, is so obvious, that whilst Buonaparte smoked out all the drones of the plains, he left several mountain-convents, and by endowing this with an additional estate in Lombardy, most considerably increased its revenues. In this he did well: for independently of the general hospitality which

is exercised by the monks, the ordinary expenses of the establishment must be enormous in a place which is inaccessible by carriages, and where a pound of wood literally bears the same price as a pound of bread. A very different system has been followed by the successors of Buonaparte.

A magnificent building which he had begun, a sort of caravansera, on the top of the *Simplon*, has been left half finished, but things are infinitely worse on *Mount Cenis*. Buonaparte had there, as well here, constructed several houses termed *refuges*, at different distances, for the shelter of passengers in the dangerous months, and endowed them with slight privileges, such as that of selling wine and provisions duty free. —It was amongst the early acts of the King of Sardinia to abrogate these, and the *refuges* of *Mount Cenis* are lost to the traveller.

To return to the monks of St. Bernard.—Of the mode in which they spend their revenues, as well as of the manner in which they fulfil the object of their institution, the anecdote which follows may serve as a specimen. An enterprizing English party, consisting of men and women, took shelter in the convent during a fall of snow. The monks fed them and their horses as long as they could, giving up their

bread to the beasts, when they had no more crude grain to bestow on them. The guests had then therefore no choice but to decamp. But how to get the horses over the snow, which was yet too soft to support them? The ingenuity and activity of the monks found an expedient. They turned out, with their servants, and placing blankets before the animals, which were carried forwards and extended afresh, as soon as passed over, conducted men, women, and beasts in safety over their mountain.

I cannot give a better proof of the moral profit which these monks have derived from the difficulties of their situation, than their having departed from the selfish system of policy which characterizes all other elective clerical bodies. Their present Prior is in the vigour of his age: he is, I understand, somewhat under thirty.

The barrier, or turnpike gate, on the summit of the mountain exacts, and very justly, considerable tolls, I think six franks (five shillings) a beast, and as much for the carriage. The revenue must therefore be considerable, as, independently of chance travellers, going to and returning from Italy, a very considerable commerce is carried on, in times of scarcity, in corn from Genoa, either the produce of Sicily or of the countries bordering on the Black Sea. The revenue thus collected goes to the canton of the

Valais, in which province the far greater part of the mountain is situated. *Domo d'Ossola* is the first town of Italy, which was formerly in the occupation of Austria, but was ceded, you know, by the last Congress to the King of Sardinia.

I observed that the toll taken on the summit, goes to the *Pays du Valais*. A toll is, however, taken on the Italian side of *Domo d'Ossola* by the King of Sardinia; this, which is collected at the passage of the river *Doccia*, is very reasonable: but I shall relate a little adventure which took place at this barrier, because it will give a good general idea of the mode in which travellers are treated by the agents of the different governments in Italy, who, for want of a reasonable maintenance, are almost necessitated to prey upon the stranger and to cheat their employer. The man at the bridge insisted on double toll from the muleteer, on the ground *that we were foreigners*. As this is a principle of taxation legalized in many states of Italy, I should not have advised the resistance of the demand, but for the remark of our conductor, who observed, that he had formerly, in the same circumstances, paid only half of what was now claimed. I therefore insisted on seeing the *tarif*; when my friend, alleging some excuse for not having it suspended in his house, as he

was bound, fell instantly fifty per cent. in his demands.

Having left *Domo d'Ossola*, I breakfasted the next morning at a small village on the banks of the *Lago Maggiore*, the *Lacus Verbanus* of the ancients.

The little islands, which are visible from this place, are well worthy the visits of those who have a taste for antiquated, seignorial magnificence. They present many objects of curiosity in their palaces furnished with chambers of dais, their family theatres, magnificent architectural gardens, and the utter contempt of expense, which they every where exhibit. The traveller sees not only orange trees trained against walls, like our peaches and nectarines, but a grove of them cultivated as standards in the open air. He is astonished at finding so tender a plant flourishing in this northern climate, nor are his causes for wonder much diminished, when he learns that these plants are covered, in winter, by temporary houses of wood which are warmed by stoves.

Yet the *Lago Maggiore* may pretend to higher praises; to that of the beautiful bordering on the sublime. Nature has indeed here given a distinct character to each of the three lakes, which lie within a small distance of each other. The

next to this, the *Lago di Lugano*, has austerer features, and resembles more our northern lakes, whilst that of *Como* bears such a print of gay and festive beauty as might have justified Berni and Ariosto, in placing a Morgana or an Alcina in one of the fairy palaces which skirt its banks.

But I am speaking from old recollections. I am now in pursuit of health and shall not willingly diverge from my course;

> 'Minding my compass and my way,
> Though pleas'd to see the dolphins play.

But a word or two as to one of the odd fish who sported in our wake! Amongst a shoal of ragged urchins, half squalling and half laughing, who had accompanied us from the village, where we had stopt, one persevering little animal, about ten years old, though the rest dropt astern, kept up with us for two miles, when the muleteer, in that spirit of charity which characterizes all tribes and classes of Italians, having ascertained that he was bound to *Aronna*, the town where we were ourselves to pass the night, offered him a place upon the roof of his carriage. I now fell into conversation with him, and having asked him the motive of his expedition, was told that he was going to beg at *Aronna;* a place which, he imagined, afforded

a better field for his operations than that which he had quitted. I naturally remonstrated with him on the nature of his project, and asked him why he did not attempt to procure some honest service; but he appeared to have weighed the matter well, and taken his resolution upon the maturest deliberation. He told me that he had left his home on account of the poverty of his parents, that it *was* his intention to seek service, but, as he could pretend to little as yet, he meant to maintain himself by begging till he was of age and strength to ensure a sufficient salary. We slept at *Aronna*, distinguished by the bronze colossal statue of St. Carlo of Borromeo, which stands at a small distance from it.

But, whilst I have been relating a fact illustrative of the habits of the poor of Italy in general, I had nearly omitted one peculiarly characteristic of those of the inhabitants of the country which I have been just describing. You know the class of Italians who wander about the world with prints and barometers. These are considered in England as Jews, but are, in fact, generally speaking, natives of the banks of the lakes of Lombardy. All follow the same trade, and (what is singular) the natives of the same village usually follow the same beat; so that in various Italian hamlets situated near the lakes, may be

found the customs of England, Spain, or America.

One ruling passion however, the love of gain, distinguishes them all. One of these men had embarked with us at Paris, as an outside passenger, and appeared to me little short of an idiot. My servant, however, who was a Florentine, qualified my opinion, by characterising him as a shrewd oaf, with a coarse but expressive Italian phrase, for which I have tried to give an English equivalent. He was returning home to his native village, with a large stock of gold, the fruit of his travels. The apparent stupidity and barbarous jargon of the man soon drew on him a tremendous fire of jokes, speculative and practical, from the two Florentines, for the muleteer, as I have said, was also of that city; and this was kept up with such activity that I more than once trembled for the consequences, the lout having, at last, become desperate, and armed himself with a piece of granite, which he threatened to drive into the skull of one of his persecutors, a threat which, but for my interference, he would probably have executed. Yet mark the persevering spirit of gain and economy which actuates this race, an object which they keep always in sight, and which predominates with them over every other earthly considera-

tion. The *lakite* had bargained to be carried to Milan, from whence, however, he had a day's journey to his own country. It was, therefore, evidently his interest to leave us at the *Lago Maggiore*, and take boat for it *there;* but a difference arose between him and the boatman, which turned upon a frank. I naturally thought that he would have given up the point in dispute, rather than undergo much unnecessary fatigue and delay, besides subjecting himself to fresh persecution, which was sure to be carried on by his indefatigable tormentors at bed and board, by night and by day. But I mistook my man; he stood fast, and refused to pay the tenpence; when the *voiturier*, who apparently thought that his qualifications as a *butt* did not counterbalance his demerits as a *bore*, literally paid the disputed frank, in order to get rid of him.

This man may be fairly considered as the representative of his cast. But to give them honour due, though miserly, they are not dishonest, and are singularly sober, active and industrious.

LETTER II.

I am sent by the Austrians to Genoa—Journey thither —Description of that City, &c.

Genoa, July, 1817.

I SHALL not particularize the first stages of my route from *Aronna*, for a reason you will soon understand. Suffice that stopping to bait at a certain town, I was sent for by a man in authority, and informed that there was an important informality in my passport, and that he must therefore turn me back from the Austrian states. I answered that the passport was precisely in the same form of words with that which I had formerly found sufficient in the states of his Apostolic Majesty. He told me "*that* might be: but that there was now a new regulation, with which I had not complied, namely, the having the said passport *visto* either by the Austrian minister in London or by some other in the countries through which I had passed, and that he must, therefore, turn me back, till I had fulfilled the conditions which he had specified."

There still appeared to me to be the alternative of sending to Milan, to procure a dispensation from this order, provided the guardian of the frontier would allow me to wait there the return of my messenger. He was ready to grant this indulgence; but observed, that of several English travellers who had tried the experiment none had succeeded; that he considered it would only be productive of additional loss of time and money, and that I had better make up my mind to set off for Turin or Genoa, and get the deficiency in my passport supplied by the Austrian minister, or consul, at one of those capitals.

I put forth all my powers of reasoning to arrest my sentence. I observed, though he stated that this rule had been communicated to the English government for the information of its subjects, I had received no intimation of it, nor did I believe any general notice had been given of it in England.—That my motive of travel was health, that I had lost, as he might see, the use of one side, and could not even stand without a stick—that I was bound to the baths of *Abano*, which, as every body in Italy knew, were only efficacious in the hot season, and that a delay would probably frustrate the object of my journey.

It was all to no purpose, and I saw he was

actually signing the sentence of "*visto et respinto*" on my passport. I naturally now broke into a somewhat stronger strain of remonstrance, and asked him whether it was possible that his government should not have allowed him latitude in the execution of orders, which must, in some cases, as in mine, be productive of much injury to the traveller? I added to my former arguments, that my letter of credit did not extend either to Turin or Genoa, which lay out of my course; and that I should have the greatest difficulty in getting myself transported thither, my stock of money being literally reduced to two napoleons. "Under such peculiar circumstances of hardship, could not an exception be made in my favour?" The inspector of the police (for such he was) answered, that he acknowledged the severity of my case, but that, were he disposed to take on himself the responsibility of departing from his general orders with regard to foreigners, a peculiar and closely defined instruction respecting the English would render this impossible. As I expressed some incredulity as to this, he read me a letter in Italian, as I understood, from the Aulic chamber, which, after repeating the order for turning back all foreigners*

* This was true; but I found before leaving the town that

whose passport had not been *visto* by some Austrian minister, or diplomatic agent, particularly enforced it against the English, travelling with a passport from Lord Castlereagh. My astonishment may easily be conceived; but feigning not perfectly to understand this instruction, I prevailed on him to read it again. I then (though with little hopes of success) said that as I understood the language but indifferently, (our conversation had hitherto been carried on in French,) I hoped he would let me take an extract. My friend all but laughed in my face, put up his letter, and broke up the conference.

As to the peculiar circumstances of this transaction, I really cannot offer even a conjecture; but as to the Austrian government leaving its officers without rational discretionary powers, this is to be paralleled by every act of the Aulic chamber.

When I was last at Venice, (and I believe things yet remain unchanged,) a ship's papers, such as her register, &c. were only granted for three years, nor was it permitted to an Austrian consul in a foreign port to renew them: so that, supposing the owner of a ship, who had cleared

one exception had been made at Milan. This was in favour of a French-woman and the widow of a revolutionary general, the Duchess of Abrantes.

out for Copenhagen, during the last year of scarcity, to hear of wheat selling in Dantzick at ninety per cent. under the price it bore in Italy, he could not, if his register was near expiring, have proceeded directly to that port, but must have first returned to Venice in order to have his papers renewed. Yet the decay of Venetian commerce is made a subject of wonder!

To return to my own case.—I prepared, since it might no better be, for my digressive journey. Behold me then set out for Genoa, having with some difficulty made a contract for my conveyance thither, on the promise of paying the muleteer on my arrival.

I chose Genoa, though the road to it was the most impracticable, because I knew nobody at Turin, whereas at Genoa I had friends in our minister Mr. Hill, then resident there, and the *Signor Pellico*, Secretary to the Governor, whom I had formerly known in another part of Italy.

A new and curious scene, as contrasted with the former, awaited me on my return to the inn. I found the carriage surrounded by a group of loitering Italian soldiers, the men who, in case of necessity, were to back with their bayonets the orders of the prefect. One of these had produced a snuff-box, with the portrait

of Buonaparte, which was handed round the circle, and devoutly kissed by every one as a relic. The possessor said, "that of all men living, he had the least reason to love him, yet he gloried in being one of his most devoted admirers." He said, "he had just expended a small capital in the purchase of leather, in order to set up as a shoe-maker, when he was swept away by his conscription;" (he must have meant that of the Cisalpine republic)—"he had served under him and been wounded in Egypt; but it was there that he had learned to make a due estimate of the merits of that great man, who visited the hospitals three times a week, tasted the provisions of the sick, and inquired into their wants.—He considered him as a father, and was ready to die a thousand deaths in his service."

Though the two scenes which this small theatre exhibited, might give rise to various reflections, I shall not indulge in them, but proceed, straight forwards, in my narration. I passed through *Novara, Vercelli, Alessandria della Paglia, Novi, &c.* to the *Bocchetta,* the mountain which backs the city of Genoa. The thing is soon said, but cost me four days to accomplish with mules.

There is nothing so little picturesque, if we ex-

cept La Valletta and Gibraltar, as a modern fortified city. I shall therefore spare you all details of glacis, bastions, &c. &c. things which you are probably as little qualified to understand as I am to describe. Nay, such has been the effect produced upon me by witnessing the consequences of victory in this unfortunate country, to which ever side it might incline, that I passed over scenes of battles almost with indifference; and the field of *Novi*, the subject of so many *pæans* amongst the victors and of so much coarse pleasantry amongst the vanquished,

Begot no numbers, grave or gay,

I heard every where the most dreadful accounts of the late scarcity, but its traces were almost obliterated. The harvest of the common European grains had been long got in; the trees had yielded fruit in abundance, and the grain not yet ripe for the sickle, such as the Indian corn, an article of the utmost importance in Lombardy, where, in union with rice,* it

* A variety too of this grain, the maize, called *il cinquantino*, from fifty days being supposed sufficient to its perfection, is sown after the common European grains, to the place of which it succeeds; it is sown about the end of June and reaped in October. A sort of paste is formed from both, which is called *polenta*. This is eaten, in various ways, by the poor, often with-

constitutes the staple food of the people, promised to be equally productive. It is impossible to wander over Piedmont, and, more particularly, Lombardy, and see fields of rich herbage, of rice, of all our own grains, and others not known to us by name, fenced with olive trees, elms, &c. festooned with vines, to see even swamps rendered productive, and cultivated in hemp and flax, without forming an extravagant idea of the wealth and comfort of the country—yet, enter the palace, and you see small signs of the riches which ought to flow in from such various sources; knock at the farmhouse or cottage, and filth and famine repulse you from the door!

I pursue my journey.—A circumstance which struck me as extraordinary during this, was the uniformity of colour amongst the horned cattle. There is a strange belief current in Italy, that not only the indigenous beasts are white, (or, to speak more precisely, cream-coloured,) but that

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out any sort of condiment, and sometimes with milk; and sometimes, by the other classes, under the roast, as the Yorkshire pudding is in England. Its straw furnishes an excellent *paillasse*, being infinitely more elastic than that of ordinary grain. It is also turned to different purposes in different parts of Italy; thus in Tuscany, it serves instead of laths, for receiving plaster, coving of ceilings, &c.

even foreign beeves put on the same livery on drinking the Po. Without pretending to conjecture the cause, the fact is certain, that, in the great tract of plain which I passed over, I saw only from light dun to cream-coloured, and I went through a beast-fair, consisting, I should imagine, of at least two hundred of these animals. The first change of colour, which (where it takes place) usually deviates into red or black, is visible on ascending the *Bocchetta.*

This mountain is perhaps the least practicable of all those which are accessible in carriages. Its traverses are exceedingly steep, and its pavement (for it is paved) so infamously bad that it is difficult for beasts to keep their feet, who have not been educated in this school. My mules were continually floundering and tumbling, but their falls fortunately appeared to be regulated by a due regard to time and place. The jolts were, however, so distressing, that I have seldom felt so much relief in a journey as I did on stopping at *Volteggio*, a small town upon the mountain, though I had not then accomplished a fourth of the ascent.

Here a little scene awaited me which I shall describe as characteristic of the country and its inhabitants. I had already fallen upon my breakfast and a bottle of hill-wine, which then

appeared to me delicious, when my attention was excited by a singularly fine voice, though not always in tune with the guitar which accompanied it. I turned round, and saw a boy of about sixteen in the door-way, of an extremely prepossessing appearance, whose countenance and manner admirably seconded the subject of his air. I had already woven a little romance for him in my imagination, and, on his finishing, called him to me, in order to inquire into his story. His answer was pretty much like that of the knife-grinder of notorious memory. He was the son of a tobacconist. At the age of nine years old, he, it seems, arrived at a full conviction of the unprofitableness of this calling and the poverty of the paternal house. He therefore took his resolution; broke loose, bought a guitar, and from that time forward had wandered about the world! The countenance of this self-taught musician had now resolved itself into a sort of *slangish* style of expression, which amply confirmed the truth of his narration. He had been before inspired by his song, no uncommon instance of Italian susceptibility.

The *Bocchetta* contains some fine scenery in its recesses, and, as it is invested with an atmosphere much milder than that which visits mountains in general, the asperity of its features is

tempered by a cultivation which however does not take from their sublimity. The last gorge, through which you approach Genoa, indeed loses all austerity of aspect, and brightens into that air of gaiety which suits well with the gardens and villas which line the avenue of an Italian city.

I approached the city itself too late in the evening to form a fair estimate of its beauties; but there was light enough to smell by, and I had some impressions painfully refreshed, which I had received from the Genoese in Malta. In this island was a *depôt* of French and Genoese prisoners; the former occupied the upper floors, the second, the lower; and a small entrance-hall, which opened into the principal Genoese quarter, was common to both parties: now the Genoese insisted upon exercising a servitude on this, which I dare not describe, but which, considering its propinquity to their lodgings, was sufficiently extraordinary. The French, though more distant from the field of filth, having protested in vain against the procedure, had recourse to arms. The Genoese were not men to relinquish tamely what they considered as a privilege, and it is no exaggeration to say, that eight-and-forty hours of battle and bloodshed were insufficient to settle the point. Peace

was at length restored by the bayonets of a British regiment.

The next morning I awoke to all the magnificence of Genoa, and it is but justice to say that after-observations did not confirm the foretaste I had had of its filth. I have now seen, I believe, all the beautiful cities of the south, and have no hesitation in ranking this after Naples and Constantinople. But the charm of the latter ceases on landing, whereas the interior of Genoa does not disappoint our expectations. The streets indeed are narrow, but, to say nothing of the obvious convenience of this in a hot climate, it does not of course produce the gloom which it does in our northern cities. *We* too naturally attach the idea of small mean houses to narrow streets, whereas these are lined with magnificent palaces. In this respect, as well as in the massive and florid character of these edifices, Genoa bears a considerable resemblance to *La Valletta* in Malta: but in that island architecture has something of an oriental cast; here it has adopted a more festive character.

But Genoa is most impressive in its general exterior, and is best seen from the sea. The figure, which it forms, approaches nearly to that of a crescent. It is backed, as I have before observed, by a mountain, which is fringed

here and there with low oak-wood and olives, and it looks down upon a beautiful bay.

Imagine then to yourself a city, with something of a theatric form, at the base of a mountain, the sloping sides of which are gay with suburban palaces, and gardens full of colonnades of trellis work,* covered with the red oleander now in one blaze of bloom; add an atmosphere and a sun precisely such as you see represented in the vivid paintings of the Venetian school, and you have Genoa such as I saw it in the month of August.

Having, like Fiesco in Schiller's play, seen the sun rise over the city, and gradually impart that gay warmth and glow to the atmosphere which I have just mentioned; I bethought me that it was now decent time for an Italian visit, and accordingly set out for the Governor's palace. I was hailed by the secretary with all the cordiality I expected, and was presented by him to his chief, with whose reception also I had every reason to be satisfied. The secretary was good enough to take upon himself all arrangements respecting my passport, engaging even for the counter-signature of the Austrian. Having therefore this difficulty taken off my shoulders, having seen Mr. Hill, and arranged

* A sort of cradle-walk with a flat top, called in Italian *pergolato*.

matters with a banker, I yielded to the odd sort of fascination, which that animal yclept a *laquais de place* usually exercises, and, with a guide-book in my hand, set off with him to look at the interior of churches and palaces. But I soon broke through the charm, and, having seen nothing that satisfied me, returned to my inn, and from thence sallied again to re-enjoy, with a setting sun, what had so much delighted me with a rising one.

My short roam was however sufficient to point out to me one of the essential inconveniences of Genoa, many parts of which are, like those of Bath, inaccessible by carriages; nor indeed are the streets particularly adapted to the convenience of foot-passengers, though, in this respect, they are greatly preferable to those of Paris and most other continental towns. There are indeed broad lines of flag-stone in every street, but these are often so placed as to be almost necessarily occupied by the horses or mules, whilst the rough flint pavement is appropriated to the wheels of the carriages and the pedestrians. How the beasts keep their feet on such a smooth surface I am at a loss to conjecture. It is true that they are rough shod, by turning up the shoes both before and behind; but, besides that one does not see how this is to be a security on a hard surface, where

the points cannot penetrate, we know that these must be ground level in a very few hours. The cause for this apparently capricious arrangement of flag and flint is the disposition of the water-pipes, over which, wherever they may be, is a covering of flint, as this is more easily taken up and re-arranged, in case of necessity.

All Florence is, you probably know, paved with flag-stones, and the motion of a carriage upon these, when your horses have learned to keep their feet, is indeed singularly pleasant, being precisely like that of a sledge upon ice or hardened snow.

It being now evening, I, not having yet received my passports, wrote to the secretary to inquire if there was any difficulty respecting them. The *laquais de place* returned however without an answer to my note, and being closely questioned as to the delivery of it, assured me that he had himself put it into the hands of a *piccolo grande*. Though the world is generally agreed as to the existence of this class, I had never heard it so gravely recognized, but I found it had received the stamp of majesty itself, in the Sardinian Almanack or Red Book.*

* The meaning however annexed to the term in Piedmont is not such as one should obviously put on it. It means a sort of understrapping great man.

It were well if this monarch confined himself to similar recognitions. He has unluckily acknowledged and reinstated not only the common breeds of monks, but, as if there was not already mendicity enough in Italy, has recreated the order of Begging Friars, a measure which has shocked even many religious and charitable people.

The passports did not arrive till the next morning, so that, not being able to ensure myself, if I set out that morning, a decent lodging for the night under a very long journey, I was compelled to pass a second day in Genoa, a thing which would have highly delighted me under any other circumstances.

The passports were at last received, and I found that I had nothing else to complain of than the unexpected delays, which must be incidental to a system so necessarily vexatious. The Austrian Consul, and some other person, whose duty it was to countersign these important documents, a duty held too sacred to be delegated, had been absent. The passports were however now presented to me without fees; this being the only instance in which I ever received such a grace during a two years' travel in Italy. The government officers had not only foregone their own claims,

but even persuaded the Austrian to relinquish his.

I cannot quit Genoa without remarking upon a practice, common all over Italy, but particularly fashionable and most abused in this city and its neighbourhood: I mean that of painting the exterior of houses with architectural ornaments, and here even with masses of gay colour. This will perhaps strike you as mighty meretricious; but we must not try every thing by the test of our own habits and opinions, since these, where they are right, are possibly only right with reference to our own peculiar situation.

In our stern and melancholy climate, this mode of gay decoration would be something like dancing over graves; but here, where sun, earth, sea, and sky make almost perpetual holiday, it seems to harmonise well with the general festivity of the elements. Here also in this broad glow of general light, (for great part of the year, unbroken by partial shades,) tricks of this kind pass uncontradicted; because it is easy to charge what you want to put in shade, with such a strength of dark colour, as shall make good the illusion, in cases where you have to contend with light alone: But with us, the effect of an oblique sun and black clouds

is such, that Nature may be said to give the lie to every similar attempt at imposture. Thus, for instance, I meditate the most simple one: I want to place a statue against my house, and, fearing to break into the wall, I paint a niche behind it, for the purpose of giving it the effect of insulation. What follows? There comes (a thing common with us) a day pregnant with strong contrast of light and shade; the whole flat surface of the wall perhaps remains in shadow, while a malicious thread of light falls full upon the niche, exposing all the falseness of its pretensions.

I now take leave of Genoa, from which I shall depart to-morrow morning long before daylight.

LETTER III.

Departure from Genoa—Plains of Piedmont—Plains more common on the Continent than in Great Britain—Cremona—Mantua—Ridiculous and vexatious Conduct of the Austrians—Supposed Changes of Climate in modern Italy, &c.

Verona, August, 1817.

STARTING from Genoa as I had proposed, and re-crossing the *Bocchetta*, by the same track, (for there is no other yet begun, though his Sardinian Majesty is bound by treaty to form one,) I at last got into my new direction, and passing through *Stradella*, *Tortona*, &c. arrived at *Cremona*.

I should, however, previously to my arrival there, mention a circumstance which struck me forcibly, though it was not new to me, and I had had recent opportunities of observing the same feature in passing through that part of ancient Burgundy which lies on this side of *Dijon*, now, I believe, called the department of the *Côte d'Or*, I mean the immense tracks of plain which are continually met with on the continent, and which are so rare in Great Britain.

Cremona, a melancholy town, which, like almost all the cities in Lombardy, exhibits evident signs of decay, has something to recommend it in its cathedral, which is Saxon, or something approaching to Saxon, mixed with a sort of mongrel Italian architecture; a composition frequent in these provinces. If not beautiful it is at least picturesque, and its steeple singularly so, being adorned with a sort of open work, which is also not uncommon in Upper Italy.

On arriving near Mantua, I was surprized to see a sentinel perched on the roof of a house, situated on an eminence without the works. If the Austrians resigned to the enemy, at one stroke of the pen, all their strong holds* in time of war, they seem determined at least not to be surprized out of them in peace, and have therefore stationed this sentry, I suppose, to watch

> —— "the turnpike-road's approach
> Lest treason lurk'd in the *Cremona* coach;"

supposing always that *Cremona* was in a situation to mount and maintain so respectable an establishment. We now, however, without mo-

* These, it will be recollected, were all given up, without firing a shot, after the battle of Marengo.

lestation from the advanced posts, proceeded across an inundation formed by the river, and penetrated into the

——————————— terra
Che Menzo fende e d' alti stagni serra.*
Ariosto.

On entering the Austrian territory, to avoid the incessant plague of custom-house visitors, I had had my baggage sealed, after examination, with the exception of a small portmanteau, containing a few changes of linen. On my arrival therefore at Mantua, I thought myself so secure against any attempt at imposition, that I repulsed the janissaries who gathered about me. The muletect, who had however his recollections fresher than myself, entreated me 'to speak them fair, and, as to the fee they expected, he would willingly pay it rather than expose himself to their outrages.' As I thought the being sealed was a security against their wrath, I tried to dissuade him from conciliating them; but he observed, that 'though *my* baggage was safe, there was nothing to prevent their cutting *his* coach-lining and cushions to pieces, under the pretence of searching for contraband articles, an evil which

* ——————————— the renown'd
City which Mincius parts and swamps surround.

he should infallibly suffer if they were not duly propitiated;' I therefore gave them what they wanted, and my annoyance ended for the night.

You will recollect that the muleteer could have nothing with him but what was the produce of the Austrian states, though perhaps of a different province, as his carriage had been closely searched on entering the Emperor's dominions; but I might have been aware that this was no protection, having been formerly obliged to throw away a bottle of Vicentine wine, which I had in my carriage, in order to deliver myself from the eternal persecutions which it brought upon me, at every new provincial frontier, I having previously paid duty upon it four times in the Austrian dominions, the whole of the said duties amounting perhaps to five farthings.

But I shall plague you no more with the petty police vexations I may undergo, having, I trust, already given you a sufficient idea of their character and extent.*

As I have, however, observed upon some of the moral causes of mischief with which Providence

* The following official papers of regulations respecting travellers may come in aid of what has been already stated. It is reprinted exactly from the original.

has been pleased to visit this afflicted country, so was I also destined to witness some of the physical ones.

NOTIFICAZIONE.

Dell' Albergatore ———— all' Insegna ———— dei Forestieri che sono pervenuti ad alloggiare nel di lui Albergo li ————

Cognome, e Nome
Se nubile, ammogliato, o vedovo
Età
Religione
Patria
Luogo di nascita
Condizione
Proveniente da
Se solo, o con aderenti, o servitù

Numero di questi

Cognome, e Nome
Se nubile, ammogliato, o vedovo
Sesso
Età
Religione
Patria
Luogo di nascita
Da chi ritrae i suoi mezzi di sussistenza
Recapiti, o passaporto, e da chi rilasciati
Mezzi di sussistenza, ed occupazione
Mottivo del suo arrivo
Quanto tempo si tratterrà

I had heard one night, in bed, at my inn, a violent thunder-storm; and on leaving Mantua saw its melancholy effects. The vines and the grain were prostrated, houses unroofed, and some actually beat down. It seems an unwonted minister of wrath had mingled in the

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Il sunnominato Forestiere è partito li ——— colla posta, o col vetturino ——— alla volta di ———.

Il sunnominato Forestiere si è trasferito li ——— e prese il suo alloggio in Casa ——— Contrada —— al Civico N. ——— Mantova li ———

AVVERTENZE.

1.° L' albergatore, o chi è abilitato ad alloggiare Forestieri, è obbligato di notificarli nel termine prescritto, lo che si riferisce pur anco nel caso quando i Forestieri abbandonano l' alloggio proseguendo il loro viaggio, o prendendo un' altro alloggio. I contravventori incorrono nella pena stabilita dal § 78 parte II. del Codice delle gravi trasgressioni.

2.° Sotto Forestieri sono compresi anche quei sudditi Austriaci, che pervengono dalle altre parti della Monarchia.

3.° Onde evitare ogni equivoco il letterato Passaggiero adempirà a quanto sopra di proprio pugno.

4.° Nessun Forestiere di qualunque rango, o condizione si sia, può esimersi di questa Notificazione prescritta dalla Legge. In caso di rifiuto se ne renderà tosto inteso quest' Ufficio di Polizia.

——— *ALBERGATORE.*

Dalla Tipografia all' Apollo. (Prezzo Cent. 4.)

shock of elements; this was a water-spout, which, in whatever direction it moved, had furrowed out a deep track of havock and desolation.

Had I not had the most urgent motive to stir me to such speed as I could make, the melancholy and deserted appearance of the city of Mantua, the swamps which surround it, the mephitic vapours they exhale, and their effects, visible in the melancholy and muddy complexions of its inhabitants, were all circumstances which would have urged me to an immediate departure.

I caught, however, something of the religion of the place, and visited before my departure the *Piazza Vergiliana*, a sort of close, which forms the public walks of the town, divided by straight, low, clipt hedges, and having, at one extremity of a considerable area, the bust of Virgil upon a column. Three sides of the pedestal which supports this are filled with ill-assorted inscriptions in verse and prose, ancient and original; the contriver, being now at the end of his memory and invention, filled up the fourth with the symbol of a swan.

Having seen this, and wandered through a few churches, where I stumbled upon nothing that engaged my attention, I started on my

journey eastward, travelling under a sun which might have boiled the blood of a salamander.

The present summer is, and has been, intensely hot,—hotter, as all agree, than any they have had in Italy for years; and it may be observed here, that the same opinion is prevalent, as with us, that the order of the seasons has been somewhat discomposed, and the heat of summer very sensibly diminished. This belief seems to rest upon a better foundation than such notions usually do; for I recollect that, when I was last in Italy, the person who had the charge of the Observatory at Turin, told me, that the fact was placed beyond doubt, by a series of meteorological observations.

I arrived at length, previous to undergoing complete dissolution, here.

LETTER IV.

Verona—its Localities—its Gothic Monuments—Tombs of the Scaligers—This City the Cradle of many great Men—of Ippolito Pindemonte—general Character of his Poetry.

Verona, August, 1817.

VERONA, a very considerable city, presents itself under a very extraordinary aspect to the traveller who arrives from the quarter from whence I came. You enter it by a magnificent approach, and a street probably the widest in Europe;—and I have Oxford-road fresh in my recollection.

This street is indeed short and single in its breadth, but the city in general pleases by its picturesque appearance, to which an abundance of marble quarries has not a little contributed, thirty-five varieties of this species of stone being found in its neighbourhood.

The situation of Verona recommends it still more; the town being planted at the foot of the Alps, and built on the two banks of the Adige, with fine openings to it, somewhat similar, though

on an inferior scale, to those of Paris upon the Seine, and those of Florence upon the Arno.

It is impossible not to regret, when one sees the advantage that has been taken of those rivers, that none should have been made of our own nobler stream, with its magnificent accompaniments of vessels, boats, and bridges. Yet what the effect of such quays would have been, may be judged from that of the Benchers' garden at the Temple. But, to say nothing of the small dimensions of the paltry territory of the *Scamnites*, through what holes and alleys is it approached?

We have no right to charge our ancestors with this fault, since the present generation has had two opportunities of correcting it, once when Somerset Place was built, and again, when, what are termed the improvements in Westminster were accomplished. But on all such points, save in the single article of bridge-architecture, we have been, are, and ever shall be Hottentots.

To return to the *Adige*, (the *Athesis* of the ancients)—it is bestrid by four bridges, one of an enormous span. This is, however, only a holiday bridge, having been opened formerly but once a year, on account of the danger which would have attended a greater wear and tear, and being now entirely shut up.

This circumstance is somewhat characteristic of the nation, and you may often amuse yourself in Italy by the discovery of some whimsical relation between the external appearance of cities and the genius of the people which inhabits them. Another bridge is curious in a different point of view, two of its arches being Roman and of the pure age of Roman architecture.

There is perhaps no other city in the north of Italy which contains such precious records of antiquity, or which presents such interesting recollections to an Englishman. But I shall refer you, for its monuments, to *Maffei*, or, if you have not the courage to deal with him, to the Guide books who have copied from that ingenious author.

One only exception to the silence I have imposed on myself.—Travellers in Italy are in the habit of neglecting the monuments of the middle ages; yet these are greatly deserving of attention, because they have here somewhat of a different character from those of France, Germany, and England, every thing Gothic having caught something of a new colouring from this southern clime.

Still, however, there is a more general characteristic of Gothic monuments, which renders them in my eyes yet more interesting and in-

structive: As all notions of ideal beauty were lost at the time of their construction, all bear the precise stamp and character of their own peculiar age. There is moreover often an odd sort of poetry in these monuments, which speaks strongly to the imagination.

These reflections were awakened by a view of the sepulchre

> ——— " del gran Lombardo
> Che porta in su la scala il santo augello."*
>
> *Dante.*

To say nothing of the architecture of the several tombs of the Scaligers, two of these struck me much as saying more than any sepulchral monuments I ever saw; they give you an image of the life and death of the man whom they commemorate. On the top, the

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——————— of the Lombard
Who bears the holy bird upon the ladder.

One of the Scaligers, thinking he should derive greater strength from making himself a feudatory of the empire, than by holding his power as elected by the people, (or rather as successor of his father an elected sovereign,) asked and obtained the title of Imperial Vicar instead of that of *Capitano del popolo.* He, on this occasion, added the eagle to the ladder, the ancient bearing of the Scaligers.

Dante, as a furious Ghibelline, calls the eagle the holy bird.

Capitano del popolo is represented on horseback, with a sword by his side and a wand in his hand, which was the recognized symbol of his power; on a lower stage he is stretched on the bed of death, with his hands folded in prayer.

A circumstance is worthy of observation in these monuments as indicative of the peculiar properties of Italian climate. A curious unpainted iron trellis forms the protection of them, and is of the same age, (1350, if I recollect rightly). Yet this screen, though some parts of it, as the armorial bearings of the Scaligers, are thin, has not been injured by time. The Italian air, even where charged with sea salt, as in the Venetian islets, seems to have very little effect upon iron.

This city has been distinguished as the cradle of many illustrious men; but I am as little disposed to give you a list or history of these as of her more material wonders. Still there is one yet living, who must not be passed over in utter silence; one

"Per cui la fama in te chiara risuona
Egregia, eccelsa, alma Verona."*

Berni.

You will easily guess that I mean *Ippolito*

* ——————————— whose name,
August Verona, forms thy fairest fame.

Pindemonte, a poet who has caught a portion of that sun whose setting beams yet gild the horizon of Italy.

Mr. Forsyth, our best Italian traveller, sums up the merits of this gentleman by saying that he *thinks,* and makes his readers *think.* Were I confined to the same number of words, I should say, that he *feels,* and makes his readers *feel;* but his distinguishing qualities are not to be quite so succinctly disposed of.

These are not perhaps such as always to meet the prevailing taste of England, which, disgusted with the cold glare and glitter of what has been called our "Augustan age," may be said to have revolutionized her poetry: But those who have formed their taste on the principles of highly cultivated poetry, or those who, though they may prefer those species which have more recently arisen amongst us, would not therefore exclude one which rests upon another base, but admit as many and as various schools in poetry as in painting,—in short, all liberal lovers of the art will, I think, derive pleasure from the works of *Pindemonte.*

But to return to their peculiar characteristics; I should say, that he was the highly polished poet of a polished age, who had formed himself entirely upon the models of ancient and modern

Italy, and borrowed much of their colouring and style.

Thus, he deals largely in gods and goddesses, and does not even exclude the abstract train of allegory; but he has not abused these engines. He has no Pan chasing a Lodona through the rice-grounds of Lombardy, nor are his allegorical figures such as were once sung by our poets, and such as we now see painted on the pannels of a sheriff's coach. His classical mythology is usually made the elegant vehicle of some moral truth, and his allegorical figures have an air of picturesque peculiarity about them, which gives them much of the life and vigour of reality.

As an instance of this, I shall cite a single stanza; it is the first of his *Mattino*.

Candido nume, che rosato ha il piede
E di Venere l'astro in fronte porta,
Il bel Mattino, sorridendo riede,
Del già propinquo Sol messaggio e scorta:
Fuggì dianzi a lui Notte, ch' or siede
Sovra l' occidentale, ultima porta,
Con man traendo a se, da tutto il cielo,
E in se stesso piegando il fosco velo.*

* With Venus' star fair blazon'd on his forehead,
The Sun's gay courier, borne on rosy feet,
Young Morn returns; and far before him horrid
Night flies amain, and, in her last retreat,

A modern author,* whose opinions always deserve attention, in discussing the application of fable to modern poetry, proposes that we should extend the same indulgence to the poets of another country, which we give to those of another age in our own. I suppose most would subscribe to such an award, and surely such an indulgence is, above all, due to the poets of Italy; a country which was the second cradle of classical fiction, where its last vestiges are every where visible, and where the people yet swear by Bacchus and Diana.†

I said that *Pindemonte*'s imaginary groups were always picturesque. I might say he is always so in his poems, and more particularly

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The western portal, snatches from the skies
Her dusky veil, and folds it as it lies.

* Mr. Coleridge.

† I was told, on asking what a morning chime signified in a sub-alpine city, that it was the *Diana*, a name which is generally given also to what is termed the *reveillée* in the military language of France and England.

I once saw a church, dedicated to the Virgin, said to have been built on the site of an old temple, which was called the Church of the *Madonna di Panisacco*, this being evidently a corruption of the dedicatory inscription of the ancient temple, *sacro* having been the original reading, or *sacrum*, which, according to the general change suffered by classical words, had been turned into *sacro*, and that again into sacco; the whole making *Pani sacrum*, or *Pani sacro*.

in his rural pieces, which, for their chaste style of colouring, their repose and their keeping, may be said to be in poetry, what the landscapes of Claude Lorraine are in picture.

It is to these and his epistles (for he has written in many styles) that I should be tempted to give the preference. A solid substratum of thought, and a vein of mild morality runs throughout the pieces I have designated, which are replete also with graces of sentiment, recommended by equal elegance of diction.

I should not perhaps ascribe to this poet great powers of what is, strictly speaking, called *invention*, but should rather say that he succeeded best in diversifying and applying, and, in fact, making his own the images of others. But such a judgment requires illustration: I will try to furnish an example.

In a poetical epistle, which, like all the rest, gives a just idea of what may be termed the *mitis sapientia* of the man, and in which he defends the neutrality he had observed in the late Italian revolutions, he describes "a black cloud which had long hovered, suspended over the Alps, and which the many had supposed was to pour down prosperity upon Italy, contemplating it with the eyes of the tropical cultivator, who sees a speck form and spread to windward of

his plantation, and anticipates its fertilizing effects: But it bursts upon his possessions in a whirlwind and deluge, drowning his crops. and uprooting his plantation. A bright day may arise upon these, but it will not repair the ravage, and a glowing sun may gild (but it will be as in mockery) the bleached and sapless branches of his cocoa-trees."

Here we have an image which has no pretensions to novelty in itself, but which is original both in its details and applications. But I am overstepping the limits I had prescribed to myself: my plan was to give a general notion of, and not to enter into a detailed criticism on the most popular branch of the poetry of *Pindemonte.*

LETTER V.

Padua—its Appearance—its Sights—An Accident illustrative of national Manners—My Departure for Abano.

Padua, August, 1817.

You have, I dare say, as I did, formed a sort of pleasing idea of Padua. I hardly know how I came by this; but in truth, recollections and associations, however incongruous, tell very often as much by quantity as by weight, and, I fancy, I threw together the notion of Antenor, of Academic groves, of Catharine and Petruchio, &c. &c. &c. These visions vanished before a villainous supper, always excepting that of Catharine, which was brought yet more home to me by the "beef without the mustard."

Padua indeed is a city which, beyond all other unhappy towns, disappoints the expectations of the traveller. Its streets, flanked on either sides with arcades, or what we absurdly call piazzas, in London, present such an appearance of melancholy monotony as leaves no room for regret that

Nero did not realize, as he intended, the same design at Rome, though it is true that these afford a great convenience in the hot and in the rainy season.

Add dirt to dulness, and to that an air little superior to what is breathed by a cat in an air-pump, and you will have an adequate idea of Padua.

The ugliness, however, of an Italian city is never unredeemed deformity, and even Padua has one pleasing and interesting feature in the *Prà dela vale.*

The *Prà dela vale,* formerly a marsh, (as its name implies,) bears some resemblance to a London square; but the interior, the principal point of likeness, is inclosed and ornamented in a very different style. This is shut off by a circular branch of running water, brought from the Brenta, the banks of which are fringed by a double rank of statues, the exterior facing outwards and the interior inwards. These are all worthies of the place, and it may be remarked that this sort of apotheosis of their citizens (as here and at Verona) is peculiar to Venetian towns.

Still this is the only local beauty in Padua; yet is this city the favourite summer residence of the Venetians, who here re-enact the same round of life which they live in the place of St.

Mark, and to be sure, as Sir Toby predicated of his boots, *that they were good enough to drink in*, so Padua may be said to be good enough to sip coffee in.

Yet one should imagine that if he had no taste for rural beauties, the Venetian might choose a more salutary air; and that he had had enough of mosquitoes, not to seek a place where they may be said to have established their head-quarters, and only to divide their power with the flies and fleas.

It must, however, be confessed, that Padua, as well as Venice, contains better defences against fleas, the worst plague of Italy, than other towns —these are stucco floors, called here *terrazzi*. As these pavements are pretty and cheap, (for they cost less than brick floors,) I shall give you some account of the mode of their construction.

Having formed a substratum of some binding substance, the stucco is laid on. On this, while still wet, are sown small pieces of marble, composed of the sweepings of sculptors' shops, which are rammed down, and the whole pumiced. The ground is then tinged with due regard to the tints of the marble, which is sown on it, either with a view to gradation or contrast of colour. This done, and the floor well polished,

the whole presents the appearance of a beautiful variegated marble. If it is wished to give it additional grace, nothing is more easy than to surround this species of carpet with a border, or to place some ornament in the centre; or to arrange the whole, in a regular pattern, as it only requires a little more precision in bestowing the same material. The *terrazzi*, thus composed, if used with common care, will last above half a century.

The first establishment of a manufacture of this kind would undoubtedly be attended with some cost; but, as many beautiful British marbles are now worked in London, which appear to be the most costly part of the materials employed, these might be had at as little comparative expense as in Italy.

It is curious that though this cheap and beautiful art has never been transplanted into England, it is about to take root in a more northern climate; and many Venetian tarrass-layers have set out, upon invitation, for Russia.

But you will be inclined to ask me whether Padua contains nothing better worth the attention of the traveller than her *terrazzi?* Un-

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* I have seen some in Venice, which were known to have been laid seventy years ago.

doubtedly she does; but amidst the works of art which I visited, little engaged my attention except some treasures of Canova and a chapel said to be painted by *Giotti.*

To this supposed work of one of the fathers of Italian picture I was directed by a letter of *Gasparo Gozzi,* but neither his nor any body's authority can make me subscribe to the principal work (a painting of Hell) being by his pencil; for the devils depicted in it are fat and vulgar, and I will not believe that *Giotti* could have been guilty of so grievous a solecism.

But I must revert to myself and my own concerns, first assuring you, however, that neither on the present nor any other occasion, shall I mention these, except where I find them involving some point illustrative of the general character of the nation amongst which I am living, or of some of the casts which compose it. Having premised this, I proceed to my story.

Though I had continually advanced money to the muleteer, I still owed him about sixteen *louis d'or,* and, consequently, sent to the merchant, on whom I conceived myself authorized to draw, desiring that I might be directly furnished with twenty. But it seems there was a small informality in my letter of credit. This had been made out for *Siri and Wilalm,* of

Venice, amongst other continental merchants: but my banker in London, as well as myself, conceiving that they had also an establishment at Padua, (whereas it turned out that they had only a correspondent,) had inserted in the letter *Siri and Wilalm*, of Padua. Though it was evident that this was a mere clerical error, as it is termed in our parliamentary language, the correspondent, to whom I was known, from having formerly had considerable money-transactions with him, stated that he could not possibly acknowledge a document not directly and formally addressed to him; but that, on receiving instructions from *Siri and Wilalm*, he would disburse what was required. There was no remedy, therefore, but to go, or send to Venice. In the mean time, what was to be done about the muleteer, who was impatient to proceed to Florence, and had agreed forthwith to transport to her destination the *prima donna* of the Bolognese opera, together with her monkey and a marquis?

This was one of those distresses, which, though rendered small by distance of time, are, for the moment, great and serious objects of annoyance; the more so, as the merchant had cut off all hope of a loan, though only to the amount of the muleteer's demand, by de-

claring that he had not sixteen louis to furnish me.

In such circumstances, I could only call the muleteer and explain to him my difficulties: these, to my great surprize and delight, he did not consider as insuperable; but when I found his hopes rested on the waiter at the inn, I nearly relapsed into despair. The waiter, however, justified the sign of his inn, the *Stella d'oro,* and brought me the desired *louis;* a thing which will perhaps appear less wonderful to you than to those who have resided long in Italy.

The moral of my tale is twofold, as Mr. Vellum says. It may serve to shew, in the first place, the distrust or poverty of an Italian banker, who had not, or pretended not to have, sixteen guineas in his possession, and, whether this was true or not, did not seem to feel any mortification in making this statement; while it, on the other hand, shews the estimation in which, even an unknown Englishman is held amongst the Italian people.

It is indeed true, that the English are disliked by the Italians as a nation, are considered as having riveted the fetters of Italy, and violated their national faith, which had, before the

unhappy business of Genoa, been considered as inviolable. But still the Italians are too discriminating to consider all the English as accomplices to that transaction, and draw a distinction between the conduct of the cabinet and individuals, which I have never seen taken in other instances upon the continent.

I had lost, as I had anticipated, all chance of procuring immediate lodgings at Abano; but, after waiting some time here, I learn one room is now vacant. I shall not inquire into its merits, but set off to take immediate possession.

LETTER VI.

Abano—a general Description of the Place—its Etymology—Classical Traditions and Accounts respecting it—Mode of applying its Muds and Waters—their Efficacy, &c. &c.—Society at Abano—Characteristic of Italian Society in general.

Abano, August, 1817.

I AM at last established—

Fra l'Adige e la Brenta a' pie de' colli,
Ch' al Trojano Antenor piacquer tanto,
Con le sulfuree vene, e rivi molli,
Co' lieti solchi, e prati ameni a canto,
Che con l' alta Ida volentier mutolli,
Col sospirato Ascanio e caro Zanto—*

or, to speak plain prose, am arrived at Abano.

This village is about three miles from the Euganean Hills; and the houses, occupied by

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* 'Twixt Adige and 'twixt Brenta, by those hills,
Whose scenes the Trojan exile so delighted,
With their sulphureous veins and gentle rills,
And meads, and fields with fruitful furrows dighted,
That he for these the pools which Xanthus fills,
And Ida and the lov'd Ascanius slighted.

those who resort to the place, for the benefit of its muds and waters, are yet nearer, all situated in an extensive plain: From this rises a sort of natural *tumulus* of a figure nearly circular, of about fifteen feet high, and, I should think, above one hundred in circumference. It appears to be of the same sort of composition as the neighbouring hills, perhaps the wreck of one, consisting of calcareous stone, *tufo*, and other materials, indicative of a volcanic origin.

From this mount burst two or three copious streams of hot water, which are capable of boiling an egg hard, at their source. A part of these serves to fill the baths, and pits for heating the muds; a part loses itself in cuts and wet ditches, amidst the meadows, and a part turns the wheel of a mill, which whirls amidst volumes of smoke.

The meadows, which are of a surprizing richness, extend about two miles without interruption, when they are broken by an insulated hill, entirely covered with trees, brushwood, and vines: From the foot of this issue smoking streams, and a little farther is another single hill, from whose roots issue hot mineral waters. The structure of the hills, and the character and

position of their strata, shew evidently that they were once links in the Euganean chain.

There are other springs of the same nature, and having all of them more or less of medicinal virtue; which procured this place the ancient name of Aponon, apparently derived (as has been conjectured) from ἀ privative and πονος, pain.

I can describe little more than what I see: but for...a more scientific description of the place you may refer to the Philosophical Transactions, where there is a paper on this tract of country, by Mr. Strange, formerly English resident at Venice.

All spots of a similar description are supposed to have been honoured by the visits or residence of demi-gods. This was the case with *Abano,* though one should have thought a *second-chop* Trojan would have been sufficient for so insignificant a place, for it has to boast of the presence of Hercules himself, who was supposed to have ploughed two long furrows, visible in a marble rock; I suppose for the distribution of the springs.

Præterea grandes effossi marmore sulci
Saucia longinquo limite saxa secant:

Herculei (sic fama refert) monstratur aratri
Semita, vel casus vomeris egit opus.*
Claud. de Apono.

It is to be remarked, that the same fable was related of Hercules by the Leontines in Sicily, where there were also springs of the same description, and that sulphureous waters were, I believe, generally (for what reason I know not) dedicated to this demi-god.

The place was moreover once hallowed by oracles, probably inspired by the mephitic vapour which issued from fissures in the mountains, and many local deities were worshipped here, who were supposed to preside over these salutary springs. The fame of these indeed appears to have been widely diffused, and it should seem that this tract in the later ages of the empire once ranked with Baja itself. Many passages might be adduced from classical authors to this effect, and the magnificent remains of baths and building confirm the fact of their having been of ancient celebrity.

But not only have these works of men sunk

* Moreover furrows, cut through solid blocks
Of marble, in long lines divide the rocks:
Alcides' plough ('tis rumour'd) lay'd them bare,
Or chance perform'd the function of the share.

in ruin, those of nature herself have felt the hand of time, and little resemblance can be found in the landscape before me to that which is presented us by Claudian, who visited these baths in the time of the Emperor Honorius. Some traditions moreover are preserved of sudden changes operated here by the action of volcanic fire, and I was myself a witness to one of the wonders which nature is probably continually playing off, having seen the main branch of the streams which break from the *tumulus* before mentioned, change its channel, and suddenly work itself a different vent.

It is not however upon its geological wonders that the modern notoriety of Abano principally rests. It is celebrated for its muds, which are taken out of its hot basins, and applied either generally or partially, as the case of the patient may demand. These are thrown by, after having been used, and, at the conclusion of the season, returned to the hot fountains, where they are left till the ensuing spring, that they may impregnate themselves anew with the mineral virtues which these are supposed to contain. The most obvious of these, to an ignorant man, are salt and sulphur. The muds are, on being taken out, intensely hot, and must be kneaded and stirred some time before they can be borne. When applied, an operation

which very much resembles the taking a stucco cast, they retain their heat without much sensible diminution for three-quarters of an hour, having the effect of a slight *rubefacient* on the affected part, and producing a profuse perspiration from the whole body; a disposition which continues more particularly in the part to which they have been applied, when unchecked by cold. Hence heat is considered as so essentially seconding their operations, that this watering-place, or rather mudding-place, is usually nearly deserted by the end of August; though there are some who continue to wallow on through the whole of September.

The baths, though sometimes considered as a remedy in themselves, are most generally held to be mere auxiliaries to the muds, and usually but serve as a prologue and interlude to the dirty performance which forms the subject of the preceding paragraph, they being supposed to open the pores and dispose the skin to greater susceptibility.

There is no doubt great fanaticism in this part of Italy respecting the virtues of these muds, which are here considered as applicable to many cases in which it would be ridiculous to suppose they could be efficacious. On the other hand, there seems to be as much perverse

incredulity amongst medical men on the other side of the Alps, always excepting our own, who, without rejecting the possibility of the thing, seem (at least those I have known) very discreetly to suspend their belief.

I can for myself see nothing improbable in the effects which the muds are supposed in many cases to produce; but to pursue a safer mode of reasoning, I have seen myself cases which might alone fairly establish the reputation of *Abano*. It is true, however, that the muds act very uncertainly, but this is probably the case with every medicament: and I suppose, with the exception of bark and mercury, it may be said that there is no such thing as a specific. To shew, however, that there is no ground for despair even in apparently desperate cases, and where the first effects of the remedy seem to promise least, I shall mention one of late occurrence, of which I was not indeed an eye-witness, but which still forms the subject of conversation amongst the frequenters of the baths; a great proportion of whom were witnesses to the fact.

A gentleman of *Feltre*, of about two or three and forty, was brought here last year, labouring under the effects of a recent paralytic stroke, and contrary to the advice of his physicians, who

considered him too much reduced to be able to support the severe discipline of the place. His first attempt confirmed their opinions, and he was obliged, through mere debility, to suspend his operations; but he was of that class of invalids who determine to get well and in their own way. Having therefore reposed till he had recovered breath, he returned to the charge, and took the muds and baths for a considerable time, without injury indeed at first, but without any sensible benefit. At length, when all considered his perseverance as fruitless, these began to act, and their effect was as rapid as it had at first been slow. He now mounted on crutches, and, after a few days, quitted the place, having arrived at walking with a stick.

He returned this spring, completed his cure in three or four weeks, and danced *quadrilles;* we will charitably hope as a test of his recovery. The circumstances of this case were so extraordinary that I determined to examine the books of the house, where every article is noted down from a bath to a *bouillon,* in order to see what had been his system and how far it might throw light upon his cure. I found, from these, that he had deviated very much from the regimen ordinarily pursued, and instead of taking fourteen or fifteen muds and baths, in as many con-

secutive days, limiting his stay to a fortnight; he had remained here, on his first visit, between two and three months, taking the remedies of the place (I think thirty muds and as many baths) at very uncertain intervals.

I have very little doubt that this mode of regimen greatly assisted the cure; for we know that when any medicine is administered for a long time together, or only suspended for short and certain intervals, the remedy and the disease soon come to a sort of amicable understanding, and I have observed that these muds after fifteen or sixteen applications lose their effect as a *rubefacient* upon the skin.

But you will say, is there no one on the spot who has studied their qualities, and who is capable of directing their application? Alas! here is, at present, neither skilful doctor nor apothecary, nor indeed any person or thing that can contribute to the convenience or necessities of an invalid. There is not even a bathing-room with a bell in it, nor is there a thermometer in any of the baths.

You are not however to suppose that the want of all instruments necessary to precision in medical or other research is merely local; for I never saw the pulse felt by a stop-watch in this

country, nor did I indeed myself, ever see such an implement in Italy.

But I am getting away from Abano and its miseries. To those I have already enumerated, may be added a damp and heavy air, which blunts the appetite and deadens the spirits of the strong and the rich, while it shews its effect in ague amidst the famished and the weak. It is clear therefore that the air cannot assist the virtues of these baths and muds, but on the contrary, must be considered as detracting from their salutary effects.

The other circumstances of the place, such as the absence of all usual means of diversion, appear as little calculated to come in aid of their virtues.

Every one knows the advantage of keeping the spirits amused under every species of cure. Now there is scarcely ever a newspaper to be had in the coffee-room, or a book to be procured short of Padua; but perhaps the pleasures of the place are more calculated for an Italian than an Englishman. These ordinarily consist in coffee-house prose, or listening to some *improvvisatore*, in dancing (that is those who can) to the squeak and squall of a fiddle, tormented by some itinerant blind professor, in billiards by day, or in faro by night.

But that which best ensures amusement is the fund of good humour and gaiety which the invalids here bring with them, and which each throws cheerfully into the common stock. Both sexes, when they have finished their mud-mattins and their masses, may be seen lounging in knots, if the heat will admit, under an avenue, which forms the charm of a melancholy garden; and here you have no lamentations from them over personal or local miseries, nor do you ever detect their ill-humour escaping by some secret vent. They fall naturally into society with each other, and no one ever seems to fear, as with us, another's springing an acquaintance upon him, which may blow him up in the eyes of his more fastidious or fashionable friends. All is ease, nature, and gaiety.

This system of sociability is almost universal in Italy. I recollect passing two days in the family of a gentleman who occupied the principal house in a small town in Tuscany, where, to my great astonishment, I perceived, on returning from an evening walk, the ominous preparations of lights and card-tables. Having asked the meaning of this, I was told that it was my host's turn to hold an assembly, solemnized in rotation at the houses of all the

notables of the place. At this all were present from the *feudatario* to the apothecary.

In some instances indeed even common shopkeepers are admitted (and were so formerly) to these country *conversazioni*. Yet, on returning to the city, all have the good sense to fall back into their proper ranks.

LETTER VII.

System of Italian Lotteries and their Consequences.

Abano, August, 1807.

I WAS yesterday walking out with a considerable number of persons lodged here, when a lady, on hearing two women talking about the lottery, detached herself from the party and joined them. I give you the dialogue which followed:—

Lady. My good woman, I too amuse myself with the lottery. Last night I dreamt that a person who is dead, appeared to me. What numbers does that signify?

Woman. A dead man, Ma'am, is *forty-five*, and a dead man resuscitated, *fifty*. *(I report from recollection.)* So that you must play forty-five and fifty.

Lady. Well! but he saluted me.

Woman. What with his hand, *(imitating the motion of the fingers, indicative of a familiar salute in Italy.)*

Lady. Yes.

Woman. *That* signifies five.

Lady. Thank you, good woman, for your information; which I shall profit by.

This dialogue requires a comment. The French and Italian lottery, which, I believe, are now alike, do not resemble ours. A quantity of tickets inscribed with different numbers, associated at pleasure, are shook together in a box, and then are drawn and proclaimed aloud; an operation which usually takes place in some conspicuous place in the city. Those who gamble in the lottery therefore play upon certain numbers. Thus I play upon 30, 49, 60, and inscribe these numbers on a ticket which I purchase, previous to the drawing, and of which I receive a duplicate. If, therefore, these numbers come up in the same ticket, no matter whether or not in the same order, I have won a prize; but my gains are not only the sport of chance, but are regulated, in some degree, by previous conditions. Thus I may play for an *ambo*, i. e. that two numbers, correspondent to those I have chosen, shall be found on the same ticket; or three, which is denominated a *terno*; or four, which is a *quaderno*. I should observe that the numbers employed are limited to 90, and that if only one of my numbers comes up, as 30, I take nothing by my motion.

The choice of figures on which to play natu-

rally enough gives rise to a variety of superstitions, and there are books published which shew the relation of every occurrence, whether in vision or in every-day life, to numbers in the lottery. Thus, for example, I meet in my morning's walk a mangy dog, a man in a pea-green coat with a cocked hat, or a woman with a rouged face under a white beaver one: I return home and consult my books, and find that the mangy dog is 12, the pea-green man 16, and the rouged face under a white hat 30. But I should have said that every odd circumstance whatever has a double signification. Thus, if I dream that my dog bites me, I recur to my books for an explanation of what this is significative, and here I find, perhaps, that in my dog's biting me is prefigured an injury to be received from a friend, and that the same thing is connected, by some mysterious link, with No. 62. But as the magic volume cannot of course supply a provision for every possible case, I must, if abandoned by my spells, find a resource in the powers of my own ingenuity. Let us put a case: I see a human figure on one of the highest pinnacles of the Alps. I seek an explanation in my conjuring book, but in vain. How then am I to read the emblem? I see a man who has reached a pitch as high as human daring

and address can carry him, what can this signify but that I am to mount as high as is possible in the lottery scale? The case is clear, and I play 90.

The lottery books seem, in some instances, to proceed on some principle of analogy, as in the instance of a salute with the fingers signifying five; but, in general, the relation between things and numbers appears to be a mere random association, or perhaps a fragment of the old cabalistic folly, that taught the universe was governed by numbers which regulated every thing, from the annihilation of a planet to the blowing up of a powder-mill.

I have thus given you a slight sketch of the system of regular lotteries in Italy: but there are also various bye-adventures of the same kind, for the profit of the government. Without, however, going farther into these, it will be enough to say, that there is a lottery every ten days,* and that you are pestered with the offer of tickets in every coffee-house, public reading-rooms, and even on the King's high-way.

When therefore you consider the frequency of these, and the smallness of the stake, which

* You may play at Venice and Padua from twenty-four franks down to five Venetian soldi.

puts them within the reach of the lowest of the people, for you may venture from a guinea down to a penny-farthing, you will easily conceive the wide-wasting effects of this pernicious system, which is precisely like throwing a quantity of twigs before a drowning man; in snatching at these he wastes his remaining strength, which might, perhaps, have enabled him to gain the shore.

The small shop-keeper, or the peasant, impoverished as he is, and desperate of working out his own relief, feeds himself with the vain hope of a prize, and throws away both his capital, his ingenuity, and his industry, in the wild and whimsical speculations which I have described. This is his talk by day and his dream by night; and things which immediately concern his interests often occupy his attention less in the direct manner in which they bear upon his shop or his farm, than in the strange relation which he supposes them to have to the lottery.

LETTER VIII.

Visit to Arquà—Thoughts on Petrarch's Poetry, &c.

I REPEATED yesterday a visit to Arquà, the last residence of Petrarch, or what is here vulgarly called *la gatta di Petrarca*, from its containing the embalmed figure of a cat, which, we are informed, in a Latin epitaph, inscribed under the niche it occupies, was his first flame.* I observed on this occasion how much our sensations on visiting spots, though principally interesting from the recollections attached to them, depend upon circumstances of weather.

The house, however, which was Petrarch's, is very prettily situated amongst the Euganean hills, and his single and solitary tomb, a sarcophagus, surmounted with a bronze bust, and raised upon four low pillars in a mountain church-yard, is striking.

The house contains some bad *fresco* paintings, symbolical of the passion and pursuits of the poet, and a chair and inkstand, supposed to have been his property.

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* *Felis loquitur:*
Ignis ego primus, &c.

You will recollect that when he was driven away from Venice by the material philosophers of that gay city, he chose this place for his retreat, sacrificing his books, which he had given to the republic, in return for a house granted him on the *riva degli Schiavoni.*

But what evidence is there, you will say, of this having been the actual retreat of the poet? This rests upon tradition, and there is at least nothing in the architecture of the house, or the fashion of the furniture, which is inconsistent with it. Moreover this tradition is not of modern date; for *Filippo Tommasini,* bishop of Adria, in his *Petrarca redivivus,* printed at Padua in 1650, speaks of the house and furniture, and his account exactly tallies with their present appearance.

When I visited this spot four years ago a gloomy day had involved every thing in shade. On the present occasion I was more fortunate, a fine autumnal day had shed so mild and sober a hue over the landscape, that the distances seemed to melt into each other, while the whole was every here and there broken by beautiful lights; and I could not help fancying that I saw in the landscape something which corresponded with the genius of the poet.

I will, however, beg you to believe that I

neither hung a garland on his bust, nor wrote verses in the *album*, which is consecrated to that purpose. Yet when this was offered me I felt too much in the presence of the ghostly possessor of the place, to venture upon that obvious expedient of repulse, the adding such a short adjunct to the title of the book, as has, I dare say, often delivered you from silly importunity, and the torment of racking your brains for an *impromptu*.

But between the two numerous classes, whom I will distinguish as such as are inclined to write sonnets, and such as would write *Græcum* in the *album* of Arquà, or (to speak more soberly) the admirers and despisers of Petrarch, how shall we decide? Are we to begin by discussing the reality of the passion under the influence of which he writes?

The nature of Petrarch's passion is, no doubt, an interesting subject of inquiry; but it does not appear to me to be very necessary as illustrating the character of his poetry. I shall, therefore, leave this question untouched, except by the observation, that the supposition of his passion being merely platonic, (if it were so,) need take nothing from the idea of his being in earnest. Mr. George Ellis, quoting from Warton, has well exemplified the force of this,

amongst his prototypes, the troubadours, illustrating his observations by the history of Geoffrey Rudel, who fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, by report, made a voyage to see her, and, on being met by her on the beach, at his disembarkation, fell dead at her feet. Now there was surely nothing, either in the turn of mind or the exalted platonic philosophy of Petrarch, which was at all likely to moderate the fire which he had kindled at this flame.

But let us leave his passion, and look a little to the principles according to which we are often called upon to judge his poetry, by what may be termed the broad-cloth faculty of critics at home. These persons ask—What is got by the perusal of his works? A question which reminds me of the objection said to have been made by a celebrated mathematician to Homer, *videlicet*, that he proved nothing. For my own part, I know of nothing immediately useful (in the vulgar sense of the word) which is to be carried away from any poem, which might not be much better taught in prose, not excepting even Grainger's Sugar Cane and Philips's Cyder Press. But I shall perhaps be told by another and more respectable class, and who have truer notions of poetry, that though its ends appear to be fulfilled, whilst we are engaged with Petrarch, we no sooner close the magic volume,

than our recollections of it are effaced, and the fairy fabric is dissolved, without the magician's suffering us to carry away such a vestige of it as might serve to justify the admiration we had experienced. There is undoubtedly a great deal of truth in this observation, yet is it equally applicable to another art, to which I have never heard it applied. Now, if we content ourselves with an immediate impression in the one case, I know not why we should not do so in the other. We hear a fine piece of music, which hurries us through a variety of delicious sensations with a rapidity which does not allow us to analyse them; we have only time to listen and enjoy.

It is undoubtedly very difficult to account in detail for the means through which we are pleased by his style of poetry; but, perhaps, what Shakespeare has said of a certain description of eloquence,

> "Where every something being blent together
> Turns to a wild of nothing save of joy,"

offers the best explanation of them.

The cause of the evanescent nature of it apparently arises from its merit consisting, not only in nice and mingling shades of sentiment, but in the extreme delicacy of the diction and the prosody, which harmonize exquisitely with the passion and imagery which they clothe.

But as it is impossible that this should be felt by those who have not made a long and close study of Italian, I am led to suspect that the enthusiasm of the greater part of the English admirers of this poet is not much better founded than the contempt of his detractors: for if we cannot allow that a common knowledge of our own language enables a man to try such questions at home, we can yet less give him credit for such nicety of sense, disciplined by exercise, as shall qualify him to distinguish all the mother-of-pearl tints of this species of poetry, or untie the nice links of harmony, in a language the unteachable part of whose prosody is founded upon principles essentially different from those of our own.

I shall not attempt to describe the general features of the landscape near *Arquà*, because I find the picture ready painted to my hand by *Ugo Foscolo*, who has moreover animated the foreground by delightful figures of his own.*

I roved about, however, some time on these hills, though not favoured by such visions, being curious to learn whether there were yet preserved any traditions in the neighbourhood, which threw light upon the habits or character

* In the *Lettere di Jacopo Ortis.*

of the poet: but could pick up no anecdote concerning him, except that he had an excessive passion for turnips, which, in the matter of eating, seems to come as near to Platonic love as is possible.

To descend to my own grosser gratifications; being parched with thirst, I was directed to a little hill-public-house, where I begged a tumbler of wine, and was presented with some which might have passed for nectar. When I asked the price, I was told it was three Venetian soldi, equivalent to three farthings of our money; yet the poison produced by the plains of Padua cost five in that city. Here then was a wine, which, if bottled for two years, would be equal to the good white wines of Gascony, nearly confined to the Euganean hills, though sold on the spot for little more than half the price, and only ten miles from Padua, with the facility of water-carriage for more than half of the distance.

I shall often have occasion probably to allude to this subject, and illustrate it with similar instances, as these make one of the most obvious sources of internal commerce in Italy, and are important, not only as is every thing which tends to the promotion of industry, and above all of agricultural industry, but as a consideration mainly involving the health of the

inhabitants. Where wine makes the habitual beverage of the country, its effects upon the constitution are immediate; and I have often heard the general character of the Italian wines, grown in the plains, (and such are almost exclusively drunk in cities,) assigned by medical men as one of the principal causes of ague, fever, and *dyspepsia* in the peninsula.

On my return to Padua, I inquired if it was not possible to have a bottle of this 'precious liquor.' I was answered 'yes,' and presented with a list of *foreign* wines, and this amongst them,* with the annexed price of two franks, which is nearly ten times as much as it cost at Arquà; and this in consequence of the impediments thrown in the way of commerce, to which I have already alluded. Yet we wonder at the want of industry and activity of the Italians!

The great bar to internal commerce are the custom-houses on every provincial frontier, and the duties levied at the gates of the Italian cities, where every thing is taxed, and many things prohibited. Touching these, I must here introduce an anecdote of recent occurrence. An acquaintance of mine in Padua was in the

* It is known in Padua by the name of *Vino di Petrarca.*

habit of receiving articles from his country-house in the neighbourhood of this city. One day, as usual, the servant was stopped at the gates to pay the customary duties on his freight, which consisted of strawberries and peas. Unluckily the custom-house officers, in rummaging amongst them, discovered a tongue; and the whole cargo, and the horse and chair which brought it, were confiscated, till the possessor had given security for the payment of a considerable fine.

LETTER IX.

Excursion—Badness of the Lombard Cross-Roads—Lombard Farms—Difference of Customs in the Italian Provinces—Value of Land in Italy—Humane Treatment of Beasts by the Italians—Visit to LA BATTAGLIA—*Visit to the Castle of* OBIZZÒ—*Difference between the English and Italian Squirearchy, &c.*

Abano, September, 1817.

I MADE a very different sort of expedition from that which forms the subject of the preceding letter, at the instance of some persons lodged here like myself, who invited me to make what they called a *baccanàl* to *La Battaglia;* a town I had already passed through on my way to *Arquà.* This is another watering place of the same description as *Abano,* situated a few miles off, and, like this, at the foot of the Euganean hills.

As Goldsmith, when the American crimp proposed to him to go as secretary of legation to the Chickasaw Indians, observes, " that though he knew the fellow lied in his throat, there was something too magnificent in the proposal to be rejected," so I, though I believed there

was not to be found in the whole plain-country of Padua, a single bottle of wine that could justify the term, was yet too much pleased with the classicality of it not to close with the invitation.

We accordingly set out with such an equipment of horses and carriage as might baffle the descriptive powers of a Butler. Suffice that the vehicle groaned and shrieked as if every jolt would be its last, and of the horses, one was blind, the other lame, and both were restive.

These were indeed, as well as the vehicle, little calculated for the course we had to run, and we had not proceeded far before I perceived a yet stronger resemblance between Goldsmith's case and my own than I was at first aware of. I had before gone through Padua, when proceeding in this direction. We now took a cross road, which we found such as one might expect to meet with in the territory of the nation to whom he was to have gone in a diplomatic capacity. After proceeding about three quarters of a mile, to the loosening of our teeth, and nearly to the luxation of our shoulder bones, we stuck fast in a deep and water-soaked hole, from which better beasts than our's must have failed in delivering us.

This catastrophe took place opposite a small farm house, which, though these are usually large

and magnificent in Lombardy, would, in England, be considered as a bad labourer's cottage. Here my friends (who were whole, wind and limb) furnished themselves with spades and maize-straw, and having, with infinite labour dug the carriage out of this *slough of despond,* and, by making a substratum of stalks of the Indian corn, prevented its reabsorption, we again put-to the horses, necessarily untraced during the preceding operation: at this moment, however, a tremendous storm (one of those punishments which justly await parties of pleasure) drove us, for shelter, into the house.

I here began to catechize the inhabitants in the true spirit of a traveller, and shall give you the result of my inquiries. I have already described the outside of this building. For the interior, it was without a pavement, and such as you would imagine it must be death to have an ague in.

The possessor, or rather occupier, of this farm, for he was only tenant at will of house and lands, rented five acres, he told me, at the rate of three hundred and forty Venetian livres, or about seven pounds of our money: over and above this he had to furnish his landlord with four couple of poultry. The tenant of a house not two yards off, and whom we also found in this

hovel, rented, on the same tenure, four acres, for which he paid two hundred and forty Venetian livres per annum and six couple of poultry, two of which were to be turkeys of—I forget how many pounds weight.

In neither of these cases (as is common in Italy) was there any mitigation of rent, in cases of accident, such as bad crops, storms or floods, to which latter evil the Venetian state is peculiarly subject.

I have since gone over several farms in my neighbourhood, some large, and some small, the rent of which was, in some cases, paid in money, and in others, partly in money and partly in produce. In short, I have found every possible variety of tenure, except that of the *metairie;* as it is styled in France, though this is common in the Paduan province.

I mention this because M. Chateaubriand mentions the system as universal in Italy. I should have thought this very ingenious traveller might have discovered that there was no such thing as system in Italy—no, not even in the same petty state, every province having customs of its own. And in corroboration of what I have stated, I could cite whole districts where the *metairie*-tenure is unknown, though it is undoubtedly the most general and popular in the peninsula.

I shall here cite another mistake of the same author, as arising out of the same inattention and love of generalization. He talks of the acre of the north of Italy (if I recollect rightly) being equivalent to the French *arpent*. But there are a dozen acres of various measure in the north of Italy alone; and, to borrow an example from the state in which I am resident, there is nearly the difference of a quarter between those of Padua and Verona.

Hence, it is impossible to calculate the value of land in the peninsula, according to any recognized standard, though an idea may be of course formed of the general fertility of the country from the product of any given quantity, as a sack of wheat; yet here again, the nature of the land is so various, (as if every thing were in league to puzzle the inquirer,) that the average produce of this will be found to vary from five-and-twenty to three, excluding always mountain land.

In the description of my Paduan farms, I ought to have stated, that the second tenant held two cows, during pleasure, from his landlord, on condition of maintaining them and furnishing him with the moiety of their produce: Thus, every second calf, pail of milk, or pound of butter, was the landlord's; the rest was his own. This practice, though it is open

to obvious frauds, is popular all over Italy, and more particularly where the system of the *metairie* prevails. In this case, the landlord often, as in Tuscany, supplies the tenant with seed-corn, instruments of husbandry, and beasts, all of which are to be made good by the tenant, in case of loss or consumption.

Though I am inclined to ascribe the Italian's humanity towards animals to his extreme good nature, the more so, as it extends to all tribes of the brute creation, I cannot but imagine that this system, which makes it so obviously his interest to take care of his cattle, materially contributes to it. Whatever may be the cause, the fact is undoubtedly true; and, except in the Neapolitan state, where they load their horses almost to the breaking of their backs, and drive them as if they would drive their tails off, I scarcely ever recollect to have seen an act of cruelty committed on an animal. You see cats seated on open shop windows, and in the streets, and you may stoop to pick up a stone, without alarming the fearless confidence of the dogs. But nothing is more striking than the tenderness with which the beasts of labour are treated. In Tuscany, they have always a provision of food, in little baskets, suspended to their muzzles, and the sort of easy and friendly relation which exists in these provinces

between man and beast is perfectly delightful. Thus you will hear a peasant, perhaps, say to his oxen who are carrying home a load of hay, "*Povereti, povereti, vu lavorè per vu stessi;*"* or, as if calling on some one to admire the merits of a favourite, "*Vardélo, vardélo, come va drito, come va pulito,*" *&c.*† Indeed the labouring beasts may be said to make a part of the social circle; for it is a common custom, in some parts of the Venetian state, for the family to assemble on winter evenings, probably for warmth, in the ox-stable, and there work and converse—a custom which one should imagine must tend much to tighten the bonds of this quadrupedal and bipedal alliance.

But to return to our own beasts: these were now reharnessed, on the storm being apparently overblown. We, in consequence, proceeded on our journey. This presented the usual scenery of Lombardy; trees sometimes in loose rows and festooned with vines, and sometimes planted so close as to form a fence without the assistance of intermediate shrubs; while, in some places,

* Poor fellows! poor fellows! you are working on your own account.

† Look at him! look at him! how strait, how gallantly he goes, &c.

the fields were divided by hedges, occasionally made gay by the *althæa frutex*, which is here an indigenous plant. This, and green herbage, with the *Euganean hills* in the distance, composed the landscape.

But I see you turn up your nose at *green fields*, as if these were things not to be seen in Italy. I do assure you that you may gaze upon them till you are tired, in Lombardy. I have, indeed, heard some of my countrymen object that they do not offer to the eye the true English green: for *my* part I prefer the Italian, which strikes me, from its having more of yellow in its composition,* as infinitely more picturesque; nor do I know a more melancholy combination of colours than that of a dark green ground, turned up with black clouds—the ordinary livery of the English year.

We at length arrived, and without further misfortune, at *La Battaglia*, a small town, consisting of one broad street, with the *Brenta* running through the center. This is spanned by a bridge, so steep, that our unhappy cattle were unable to scale it, and we were obliged to dismount, in a heavy rain which had recommenced, and make our way on foot to the hotel. Here

* I suppose from the greater quantity of yellow light.

we found ourselves suddenly inducted into all the decencies of Christendom, for in the very entrance was a circulating library, with books, music, and wash balls! Advancing we found a spacious portico, with curtains, which opened upon a garden, with all the proper pomp and circumstance of strait and spacious walks, orange trees in pots, a fountain, &c. &c. Ravished with the delights of this elysium, I already schemed abandoning *Abano*, and transferring my quarters to *La Battaglia*, when the result of a few inquiries made me as suddenly change my resolution.

Only a short time before, it seems certain silver forks and spoons had been lost—no very extraordinary circumstance, one should have imagined, in the hotel of an Italian watering place, which swarms with *vetturini*, servants, servants' servants, and a mixed rabble, not seen in places of a similar description amongst us. The master of the house however, though he might have easily conjectured what was become of his plate, in the true spirit of an Italian landlord or shopkeeper, usually indifferent as to the feelings of his guests or customers, applied to the police, and obtained power for searching the baggage of his lodgers. An outrage so monstrous naturally drove away the greater part of those who had received it; and I, not choosing to be sub-

ject to these domiciliary visits, put about ship and gladly reshaped my course for the much despised port of *Abano*.

I ought, however, to give some account of another lion, or rather lion's den, which lies by the way. This is a curious villa, once belonging to the House of *Obizzo*, (Howitzer,) the ancestors of which (this ground continually suggests recollections from Ariosto) are named by the island-hermit to Rogero, amongst his distinguished descendants.

This place, as moated and adorned with gardens in a singularly antique style, in some degree suggests the idea of a feudal castle from without, and, within, the illusion is complete. The great entrance stair-case, as if calculated for the easy introduction of troops and provisions,

> ——————— "ove si poggia
> Sì facil, che un somier vi può gir carco,"*
>
> *Ariosto.*

and the smaller stair-cases and galleries, cut in the living rock, carry you back into the middle ages. But what made the strongest impression on my imagination, were the chamber-walls painted in *fresco*, by *Paolo Veronese*, and representing the history of the family of *Obizzo*.

* So easy that a loaded ass may climb it.

Amidst their triumphs and their trials, I observed a scene of investiture and another of assassination, and, for the moment, believed myself in the castle, where Bradamente sees in prophetic picture, upon the walls, the fate and fortunes of the House of *Este*, and the melancholy end of Rogero.

Another interesting object is the armoury, which is completely in harmony with the place. This cannot be predicated of its museum, which is, however, curious, and contained once a magazine of various matter, from pictures, statues, books, and medals, down to musical instruments of every description. The place, however, having devolved to the House of Modena, some of the best pictures and most curious books, as well as all the medals, have been carried away. Still what is left is well worthy of attention; but curious as this villa and its museum (the most curious part of it) are, the most interesting thing relating to it is the history of its founder. The father of this founder, (I mean of the museum,) a rich and noble proprietor of the name, in the Paduan provinces, Patrician of Venice, Magnate of Hungary, &c. tried that monstrous and cruel experiment on his heir, which has occasionally been practised in England. He was to be left to what were termed

the simple dictates of nature, to be guided by her hand and illumined by her lights, and so forth. The result of the experiment, with us, is, I believe, very generally the same. The young plant, thus left to itself, after shooting into all the extravagancies of a rampant and vicious luxuriance, usually unites itself with some congenial weed, runs to seed, and dies.

It was not so in the present instance; for, in this blessed climate, the most hopeless stock, and veriest crab, however uncultivated, is capable of bearing some sort of fruit, nutritious or palatable. The little Howitzer was impatient to go off, and at last took fire of itself.

There appear to be few tracts which present themselves to a young man wholly uneducated. The present subject took the road which is most obvious in this country, that of the antiquary, and, in its pursuit, formed, with considerable taste, judgment, and economy, the multifarious magazine of *Obizzo*.

An English country gentleman, thus left to himself, if he exceeded the accomplishments of Squire Sullen, in the Beaux's Stratagem, would have bounded his acquisitions by the science of the chase; but it is to be observed here, that, independently of the country not furnishing the same food to pride, or the same pleasures as it

unfortunately does with us, the *Squire of Dames* predominates over the *Squire of Beeves*, and renders your country gentleman, where he is to be found, a very different variety of the genus from that which is indigenous in the British isles. Indeed the rare old stock of squires, now nearly worn out, even in England, has nothing that can at all parallel it in the various countries of the continent. Poor G— E—, who to his various other accomplishments added no common knowledge of mankind, in all its modifications, told me once, that talking on this subject with a foreigner, (I think in Carinthia,) he was assured by his companion that he, Mr. E—, had given him a very exact idea of an English squire and that he could shew him a complete counterpart amidst the mountains of his province. With this view they scaled a castle planted upon a rock, and found within, a gentleman, in a green coat, with a *couteau de chasse* by his side, singing and accompanying himself on the harp!

A trait, however, of genuine squirism, in the life of Obizzo, which broke upon me in passing into a small cabinet near the museum, but not appropriated to the reception of curiosities,* made

* In passing through this cabinet the servant lifted the cover

me suspect that the native rock must have often thrust itself up through the superincumbent stratum of vegetable mould, and a conversation with the chaplain and the old porter confirmed me in my conjecture. The most interesting particulars, which I learnt when questioning them with this view, were, that he wore a checked shirt with a laced jacket, and got drunk every morning at breakfast with white wine, and every afternoon at dinner with red.

But whatever character the squire-cast may take, into whatever varieties it may break, it is in the main productive of good; and its absence (for nothing is more uncommon here than to find a proprietor generally resident on his estate) may be considered as one of the innumerable causes which keeps down Italy in the scale of useful civilization.

It is not however to different habits of life

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of the single seat which it contained, and shewed me the portrait of a Venetian enemy of his master, a Grimani, unfortunately surnamed *Caca*, with the appropriate inscription of "filth to filth."

This anecdote may, however, be paralleled by one of an English *blue-stockinged* lady, who used to shew, at Florence, a certain utensil with the name of Pope inscribed at the bottom, observing, in coarser and more explicit language than I dare use, that it received the daily offerings of her contempt.

only that we are to attribute this dislike of landed gentlemen to a rural life. This, as well as every other cause of evil, is to be attributed mediately or immediately to the genius of the government. We all know how much the love of power mixes with the love of retirement. Why does the English gentleman prefer his fields to crowded cities? Amongst other reasons, because he is an infinitely more important person in the country than in the town:—Because, if you please, he has a greater power of doing good. But with what confidence can an Italian gentleman exercise this? To live the life, perform the duties, and maintain the state and influence, which our rich proprietors do, would be to make him the object of suspicion, perhaps of persecution. This is no random conjecture; for it is not long since the house of a most blameless gentleman, who had been distinguished moreover for his hatred to the French, was broken into at night with strange circumstances of violence and bloodshed, upon pretence of searching for papers; he having rendered himself suspicious by his active benevolence. The local police was indeed censured for the act; but this is small security against its repetition. The evils arising from difference of system in Italy and England, with

respect to the residence of proprietors, will be obvious in a thousand circumstances.

Do you recollect what our friend W— used to say?—That, for his part, there was no political sacrifice which he was not ready to make for the purpose of perpetuating and securing our own happy system; that he was ready to hedge about the game-laws with new barriers, and to arm justices of peace with new powers;—any thing, in short, to encourage the class of land-owners to lie with their own wives, and live upon their own lands, instead of turning rogues and running after ribbons in London.

LETTER X.

On the intermittent Fever common in Italy—the MALARIA—*its Causes and possible Means of Prevention.*

Vicenza, September, 1817.

I HAVE at length, as it is elegantly termed, paid my footing, that is had a short but sharp attack of ague; to recover from the effects of which I have made a little flight to this place, not more for the sake of breathing a better air, than in the hope of drinking some tolerable wine, and browzing on herbage, a luxury to which I have long been a stranger, and for which I at last felt a longing little short of what is suffered by one under the infliction of the sea-scurvy.

I could indeed scarcely give you a better sample of the want of enterprize and industry amongst the inhabitants of my late neighbourhood than the following fact. There were in the principal hotel of Abano, during the height of the season, 270 heads of families, making, I suppose, at least 600 persons. Yet, though a piece of land is annexed to it, of near an acre, cultivated in Indian corn; it seems never to have occurred to the proprietor that a very little more

expense and labour might extract at least ten times the value of its present produce, were it converted into garden; and I have remained for weeks together without tasting other vegetables than a few tomatas, or potatoes, which are now diffused very widely in Italy. It appears to me a false remark, though a general one on the continent, that the English are a very carnivorous people: I believe, for myself, that they eat more vegetables than any other people whatever; for the Frenchman, for instance, only considers vegetables as an indispensable accompaniment to his *bouilli*, while an Englishman pairs every mouthful, (of whatever description,) which he swallows, with a proportionate allowance of cabbage or potatoes. The Italian is less herbivorous still than the Frenchman, as he even eats his *bouilli* without browze, except, if I recollect rightly, at Milan, where it is generally fringed with sour-crout, or a straggling border of carrots. This rule is, however, often departed from in inns frequented by foreigners, and particularly the English; but I am speaking of the ordinary table of the natives.

To the principal motive of my excursion: Abano, though not actually infested by the *malaria*, is not many degrees removed from this in-

fliction. You have, of course, heard and read much of this *malaria*, which prevails for the most part in moist and marshy tracts, and in the neighbourhood of lakes in the south of Italy. The disease engendered by this is commonly a species of intermittent, of the description of that which prevailed at Walcheren, and what is usually, I believe, known by the name of the *jungle-fever* in the East Indies. This admits all sorts of modifications, and sometimes attains such violence as to kill in a few hours, as I have known in the marsh of Syracuse.

But it is not only to places acknowledged to be infested with the *malaria* to which the common intermittent fever is confined. This is general almost throughout Italy, and more particularly in the rice grounds, and in low countries, like this, which are intersected with wet ditches.

It is indeed so common at Abano, that I believe twenty persons in this house have had it since I have been established here. A few days ago I saw a poor infant lying under a sack in the convulsions of an ague-fit; and the next morning, meeting another child, whom I knew to be its brother, and questioning him about the health of the poor little animal—to the demand of "How does your brother do?" he answered,

"Which brother, Sir?"—"Your brother that has the fever?"—"There are five of us in the fever, Sir."—"Why, how many of you are there in all?"—"Seven, Sir." And I believe this would give a fair idea of the bills of health of *Abano*, as far as respects the children of the poor.

The frequency of this fever, as in similar cases, takes from its terrors, and I have known a gay young woman surprized by it at table, shiver out a long dinner, return home as soon as she thought it decent, in order to suffer the hot fit in bed, and, this past, sally forth, full of life and spirits, to pass the remainder of the night at a ball. You may indeed live in a certain degree of familiarity with a man, without suspecting him to be under this visitation, when perhaps he will break from you in the street, go into a chemist's shop, and exclaim, "*Caro voi disfatemi due drammi, di china in acqua, chè or'ora tornerò per pigliarla.*" Questions and explanations follow, and you find that my friend has borne about the curse of a tertian or a quartan fever for months.

But I cannot give you a better idea of the coolness with which Italians treat this evil, than by recounting an incident to which I was a witness the morning after my arrival at this place. I had been attended formerly by a phy-

sician resident here, who, I heard, had suffered severely from the typhus fever, prevalent last winter and spring in every part of Italy. I determined to pay him a visit. His servant, however, told me, that he had been taken ill again, and was confined to his bed, but that he was sure he would be happy to receive me. Having retired to announce my visit, he returned to the anti-room, with an invitation from his master, whom I found, as he had stated, in bed. He said, that having exposed himself in too early a stage of convalescence to the evening air, he had caught an ague, the common postscript to a typhus fever, which he was now attacking in form. He talked to me with his usual animation, nor was there any thing in his manner which indicated suffering. On taking leave of him, however, I took him by the hand, and found that 'his touch was fiery warm.' He was actually in the height of the access. You will perhaps laugh at me, when I tell you that I myself am tempted to prefer this disease to many of those teasing maladies which seem allied to it; for surely a sort of smouldering fire of bile is worse than an ague fit, which is the 'be all and end all' of such annoyances.

The mode of attacking this disease is, I believe, nearly uniform throughout the peninsula.

My own engineer, a doctor from a neighbouring village, having first cleared for action, threw in a fire of bark, which literally rendered me deaf and dizzy for four and twenty hours, during which time this drug stood in the place of all other nutriment; and, as Boniface says of his ale, I ate my bark, and I drank my bark. Every two hours the merciless minister of medicine stood before me with his bowl. It was in vain that I cried for quarter. The answer was always, "First, fight the fever, and when that is repulsed, all things will come right." Upon this principle, if two ounces of bark, administered during the intervals of access, are not sufficient, they have recourse to a battery of four.

This medicine is seldom given, as with us, as an alterative; most content themselves with dislodging the fever, and trust to nature for the rest; not liking to familiarize their constitutions with a remedy, which, like all other things, loses its force through repetition.

Others again, more especially amongst the vulgar and ill-informed, consider the disease as destined to carry off some vicious humour, and therefore as a thing not to be checked. Under this idea, if they have time and strength enough to wrestle with it, they give the malady a free course, and thus suffer it to wear itself out.

This idea seems to have something more plau-

sible in it than such theories can usually boast; for the departure of the ague is often attended with such an accession of appetite, health and spirits, as might almost justify the epithet of *depuratoja*,* with which I have heard it honoured in these provinces. There is, moreover, a more solid reason for this system of passive war, which is, that the ague thus wearied out, generally makes a final retreat.

Bark indeed is, in greater or less quantity, always sufficient to its immediate repulse, but acts often only as a temporary cure. The ague, like an ill-laid ghost, is subject to return, and, if you have once had the misfortune to have had the enemy within the citadel, and only repelled him by one short attack, you may usually lay your account to a revisitation whenever any imprudence of your own, or any unfortunate combination of circumstances shall favour his approach. For this reason a remedy has long been sought in Italy, which should prove a

* *Febbre depuratoja.* In confirmation of this idea the following proverb is current in the Venetian state:

La frevve terzana a' zoveni la rissana
E a' vecchj, ghe sona da morto la campana.
The ague bodes the young man well,
But sounds the old man's passing bell.

That is, the ague does good, where there are stamina to go through the immediate struggle.

real Red-sea to this restless tormentor; and this is thought to have been discovered in coffee; not the vile and vapid wash which is usually made in England, and which an Italian would term *acqua tinta*, but in coffee of strength and flavour, as it is to be found every where but with us, mixed on this occasion with a considerable infusion of lemon juice.

In two instances, where I have known of its being thus administered, a moderate cup-full was given every two hours, mixed with the juice of half a lemon. In both cases it operated like bark, as an immediate specific, and in neither instance was there a relapse, though one may safely say, that this takes place here in nine cases of intermittent fever out of ten. The medicine, however, affected the two subjects very differently in other respects. In the one it was only hostile to the disease which it was called in to repel; in the other, though apparently a less nervous man, it had more formidable effects, and produced such a state of irritation as he could not look back upon without horror.

I ought to observe, that common as the intermittent is in its various forms throughout the whole Italian peninsula, I have every reason to believe, that even in many of the tracts visited by the *malaria*, this curse, which, in such places,

clothes itself with real terrors, might, under a wise and provident government, be disarmed of more than half its fury. Thus, for instance, the cause of the unhealthiness of the *Campagna di Roma** is to be traced up to its miserable mode of husbandry, which leaves the greater part of the lands in pasture, and consequently without drainage. This system, or rather absence of system, is by some ascribed to remote causes, which may certainly have contributed to it, but I know not why we are

> " For ever going round about
> For that which lies before our nose."

The obvious and most active cause is to be found in the *annona* laws, which once also existed in Tuscany, but which were abolished by the

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* Rome itself, which is dangerous during the hot months, is, I believe, never healthy, at least, if I may speak from my own personal experience, and the precautions, recommended in the following bad verses, *unde nescio.*

Enecat insolitos residentes pessimus aer
Romanus; solitos non bene gratus habet.
Sospes ut hic vivas, lux septima det medicinam;
Absit odor fœdus; sit modicusque labor.
Pelle famen et frigus; fructusque femurque relinque;
Nec placeat gelido fonte levare sitim.

I believe these instructions to be good, though I do not answer for them from personal experience.

wisdom of Leopold. When it is known that the Roman government exercises a wide power over the corn market—when we know that it imposes a tax of eighteen per cent. on all articles of exported agricultural produce, provided they are not destined for the kindred province of Bologna, we surely need not seek any other reason for half the Roman state remaining a desert, or recur to the system of cultivation by slaves, under the empire, as the first origin of the evil.

It is true, that there is every reason to believe that this state of neglect and desolation began in the time of the empire; but the same cause which is sufficient to explain the continuance of the mischief, may surely throw light upon its commencement. The *annona* laws, we all know, existed in ancient Rome, and though, perhaps, the ignorance of the principles of political economy may have contributed to the building up that high system of heroic policy to which she was indebted for her military greatness, we must consider the total ignorance of this science, amongst the immediate causes of her ruin.

Let Rome repeal her *annona* laws—let her throw no impediments in the way of agriculture, and she will have done infinitely more for the good of her citizens, and of Italy in general, than by realizing the magnificent but ill-completed

project of draining the pontine marshes. This can only be accomplished, if the thing be possible, by a great expenditure of lives and treasure; the other change is to be effected by a single stroke of the pen.

But I shall, perhaps, be told that the pen has done its duty, and that the *annona* laws were abolished by a papal decree of 1801. I deny the fact; they are only modified. The internal circulation of grain is indirectly fettered by various provisions, and the export still absolutely prohibited; all the pretended facilities given to commerce being accompanied by the *proviso* '*that grain be not extracted and transported out of the state*,'* with regard to which all the ancient prohibitions still continue in force.

* That priestly governments, upon the various principles on which they were established on the continent, from the former bishopricks on the Rhine up to that of Rome, have been always behind the rest of Europe, and always inimical to industry, is a truth generally acknowledged, and the cause is sufficiently obvious; but Rome is to be considered as infinitely worse governed than the worst of those spiritual temporalities which the late tempest has swept from the face of Europe.

The cause of this is plain. The administration of affairs is wholly in the hands of priests, while the nobility are so carefully excluded from all posts of profit and honour, that till the late change of affairs, even the parade-office of consul was always bestowed upon a foreigner. But these drones are to be

That these should be left in force may surprize Englishmen; but many causes might be adduced in explanation of the fact, besides the simple one that the genius of priestly government is uniformly hostile to reform.

The Roman people, oppressed and trampled upon as they are, have retained from their ancestors an odd habit of insurrection, and being extremely alive to every thing which, in their

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fed in some way or other. An anecdote, furnished me formerly by my friend C—, which took place when he was at Rome, will shew you how.

The best wine in Rome, the *vino d'Orvieto*, is to be considered but as a better breed of vinegar; and hence a foreigner, resident there, of I know not what country, but who had studied in an English brewery, conceived the project of introducing the use of beer. The scheme succeeded beyond his hopes, and even the Romans followed the example of the English, Swiss, and Germans, who flocked by hundreds to his vats. Whilst he was thus in the high road to wealth, a rich and powerful noble begged the *diritto esclusivo*, or monopoly of this article, from the pope. Having obtained it, he sent for the poor brewer, and communicated the intelligence, kindly informing him that he might still continue the trade, as his agent. He subscribed to his conditions, since it might no better be, and went on with his brewery. But the tax levied by the puissant peer was so great, that he was under the necessity of at once lowering his beer and raising his price. The consequences may be guessed: customers disappeared; the noble took little by his motion; the brewer became bankrupt, and the people were poisoned as before.

enlightened opinion, concerns the price and plenty of provisions, upon these occasions, as well as some others, are apt to hiss pope and cardinals, and to enforce their clamours and their groans

" with a few stones:"

and the sovereign pontiffs, not being usually of an age and character to struggle with the storm, take care not to run counter to their passions or their prejudices.

To return to the question before us, you will perhaps, though acquiescing in my notions, say " The vicious system of the Roman court may explain the unhealthiness of the *Campagna di Roma;* but that of the Tuscan *Maremma* cannot be ascribed to the same cause: which no longer exists in that happier country."

The best thing that princes can generally do, on these occasions, is to be passive; but there appear to be cases, particularly in despotic states, (where individual energy does not take the spring which it has with us,) in which the interference of the government might be eminently useful. In order to sift this question a little, let us take a short view of the Tuscan *Maremma* —its peculiarities and mode of cultivation, where susceptible of it, and consider whether the Tus-

can government, though certainly not to be charged with the cause of the evil, might not do something to mitigate, perhaps, in time, to remove it.

You may have observed in England, that lands rescued from the sea are usually unwholesome, and the diseases which they generate often take different shapes, though, with us, the evil is less marked, probably from some difference in the soil, and because evaporation, from the inferior degree of heat, is less active, and the *miasmata* consequently less noxious. Thus it may be observed, in certain spots, on the banks of the Southampton water, and the river Orwell, that the gentry, who in some degree appease the pest by port wine, are disposed to bilious complaints, and the lower classes to agues. In the *Maremma* of Tuscany, besides the intermittent fever, the peasantry of the hill-country, who seek occasional labour there, usually have their livers affected by the consequences of the *malaria* of that tract; and it is a common saying amongst the people, that "*Ci si va con la pancia vuota e si torna con la pancia piena.*" But besides the big belly which they bring back, other symptoms of prostration of strength are, of course, remarkable in their gait and voice; and a Tuscan peasant once observed to me, that if you asked one

bound on such an expedition where he was going, he answered you briskly, "*Vado in Maremma:*" but if you hailed him on his return, it was always, "*Ven-go d-a--l-la M-a-rem---ma.*"

But though the atmosphere of this tract has such, and probably more fearful effects upon strangers, who, from being used to breathe a purer air, are more sensible to its pestilential effects, it does not make the same impression upon those born and bred within its influence: these often become, in a certain degree, familiarized to the poison, and drag on a bearable state of existence. This, I believe, usually happens in similar situations; and you will recollect that it was the policy of the Dutch never to change the garrison of Walcheren, but merely to supply vacancies, in order that those who were destined to that service might case-harden themselves to the calamities of the climate.

Nor is it only that those used to a purer atmosphere are more sensible to the effect of these *Golgothas*; it is dangerous, even, when under the infliction of their diseases, to change a worse atmosphere for a better; probably because the constitution is too much debilitated to bear the stimulus of a healthy air. It is more eligible therefore, to weather the storm as you can, and not bear up for a port to repair, till the tempest is fairly overblown.

Neither of these principles are observed by the cultivators of the Tuscan *Maremma*. The population of the place, or rather its borders, being insufficient even for the scanty demands of an irregular mode of husbandry, the inhabitants of high and healthy tracts migrate into the marshes with the assurance of finding work. The most usual season of descent is the winter, when the air is less noxious from the slightness of the evaporation. The strangers are, at this time, employed as labourers in the woods, but a proportion of the neighbouring mountain peasantry usually assists in getting in the harvest. Some of those only employed in winter operations, but a much greater number of the summer-workmen, imbibe the diseases incidental to the place, and crawl away, like poisoned rats, to die at home.

Now the only means of disarming this noxious climate of its terrors, and that, without an immediate sacrifice of lives, would seem to be the system of colonization, (imperfectly tried by Leopold,) either under the immediate auspices of the government, or through corporations, chartered and privileged for that effect; and I imagine that both our adamites and preter-adamites would scarcely object to such a deviation from the principles of political economy.

But here, as experience has proved, it would

not be enough to *establish* colonies; means must be taken to prevent their *wearing out;* and both what I have heard and seen, in countries of the present description, confirms me in the idea that very simple precautions against this danger would, generally speaking, be efficacious. The first and most essential of these, respects the construction of the houses of the colonists, the sleeping rooms of which, at least, should be always elevated above the ground; nor would this be attended with great expense, since the price of building is extremely low, low even in proportion to the cost of other articles of luxury or necessity, throughout the Peninsula.

A second very important point would be the supplying the colonists with good water, for that of the *Maremma* is proverbially infamous: this might easily be done by collecting the rain on tarrassed roofs, as at Malta; and every one who has been in that island will bear witness to the good flavour, as well as salubrity, of what is thus collected.

As to the sleeping rooms, I might, perhaps, say that the insalubrity of unwholesome tracts of country here, is almost always seconded by the customs of the lower classes of the inhabitants. It is a well known fact that it is perilous to sleep on the ground-floor in Italy; yet the

greater part of the labourers in the Roman *Maremma*, and other unwholesome districts, having usually no quarters on the spot, and not being able to return to their distant homes for a few hours, throw themselves down to sleep on the bare ground, in the first hovel which presents itself, and often in the open air, in which by far the greatest proportion pass the night.

Indeed, all over Italy, the labourers, whether living near or at a distance from their work, lie down in the fields for a couple of hours, allowed them in the middle of the day, when bathed with sweat and exhausted with fatigue. Yet *fuge somnum meridianum*, without reference to the place where it is taken, is an old proverb, and I believe founded in truth; for the pores are more opened by sleep during the day than during the night, and are consequently more susceptible of mischief.

You may indeed, and it is a common custom here, take the *siesta* after dinner; but in this case you must not sally till all disposition to perspiration has ceased; and an intermittent is the usual consequence of neglecting this precaution.

I will not say that what has been suggested would universally serve to guarrantee the people against this pest; but I think I may safely assert, that the absence of such precautions would ex-

pose our peasantry, in some provinces at home, to a scourge almost as destructive. Suppose the labourers of the hundreds of Essex to be as ill clad, and ill fed, as the Roman;—suppose a great proportion of them to sleep, like that body, with no other covering than their scanty clothing, in the open air;—do you not believe that three fourths of those who led this life would be swept away by disease? The habits of the labourers in the *Maremma* are sufficient to explain the mortality to which they are liable, and to which they would probably be subjected in an atmosphere superior to that which they inhale.

But the Roman government does not attend to these common-place considerations, and her *accademie* fly at higher game. If their efforts do not mend the mischief, they, at least, serve to surprize and entertain. They propose prizes "*for an analysis of the air* in infected places, and modes of remedying it, founded upon such an analysis," *&c. &c.* This produces theories more extravagant than even might be warranted by so absurd a commission. The sages of the Peninsula are wrapt in admiration at the ingenuity of the professor, and in the mean time—*plectuntur Achivi.*

I lay, to return to my own projects, great

stress on the sleeping rooms being on the first floor, or, at least, elevated by a few steps from the ground—a practice universal in all buildings of a respectable description in Italy, not only as a preservative against common damp, but because (though there are some inexplicable exceptions to the rule) the mephitic air usually lies low; and that this is the case with some description of pestilential vapours, you may satisfy yourself by the instance of the *grotta del cane*, into which you may introduce your head without danger; but the four-footed victim, having his organs of respiration nearer the ground, remains stupified at a sniff. What is more to the purpose, you may occasionally witness this in marshes, where the mischief sometimes takes a visible form, and, in these, you may see the horse enveloped in fog and the rider in clear air.

But this plague is more often invisible, and sometimes, if I am to believe others, both creeps and soars,

"Ingrediturque solo et caput inter nubila condit."

Places are, indeed, cited as infected by this nuisance, which are situated on hills. I believe, however, it will generally be found that these (if the fact be true) spring from near marshy spots, or, during the prevailing winds, are to leeward of

some mischief, which may have occasionally the force to scale the fortress; and their unhealthiness may arise also, in part, from the ill construction of the houses, and the dirty practices of the inhabitants. In confirmation of this, we know that old London was continually subject to the plague, which only ceased its visitations after the great fire, and when the city was rebuilt upon a system which ensured airiness and seconded cleanliness. Now considering how continually frauds are practised, and ships arrive with clean bills of health from places, partially infected and not yet denounced, and the impossibility of enforcing our quarantine laws through such an extent of waters as those of the British isles, it is scarcely possible but that the seeds of plague should sometimes still find their way into the capital. But the soil is not favourable to them, and they do not take root. Filth and faulty circulation of air in cities, are the nutriment of half the diseases which man, in his laziness, considers as the necessary accompaniments of soil and atmosphere.

There are, however, certainly some other unascertained causes of *malaria*, and there is an opinion, very general in Italy, that a soil teeming with volcanic exhalations, is productive of this pest.

The opinion deserves consideration, because it is not only general in Italy, but prevalent also in other hot countries which I have visited. I have, however, found, in almost all the instances cited to me, that the effects attributed to these might more safely be ascribed to some more obvious cause. As a proof of this, I recollect, when I was in the small island of Milo, being much surprized to find the population consisting of less than two thousand souls, though *Tournefort*, I think, calculates it at sixty thousand. Asking the reason of this declination, I was told that, shortly after his time, certain sulphureous springs had broken out, which had produced, at first, an infectious disease, and, acting on the air of the neighbourhood, had ever since kept down the population.

It is singular that this absurd explanation of the fact should have been received by persons gifted with ordinary understanding. For, in the first place, allowing the truth of the infectious disease, by whatever occasioned, we all know that a few years are sufficient to replace such ravages, when population is not repressed by other causes. And as to the permanent effects of the bad air in producing such a result, the supposition is ridiculous; because the spot in question, which is certainly visited by some sort of *mal-*

aria, is of small extent, and therefore cannot widely affect the population of the island, the greater part of which is perfectly salubrious.

A very little inquiry into the history of the place furnished a much more simple explanation of the fact. In the days of *Tournefort* it was the resort of a swarm of privateers, who, by establishing in it their winter retreat, and a mart for the sale of plunder, must have produced an influx of wealth, and consequent increase of population. This source cut off, the country relapsed into its ancient sterility and scarcity of inhabitants.

Something similar to this I have experienced in almost all the places where depopulation is attributed to the effects of volcanic vapour. But I have been the more induced to mention the circumstance of Milo, because it is one of those instances on which the believers in the pestiferous influence of these exhalations particularly rely. As far as my own experience goes, I should consider such as rather exhilarating to the animal spirits, and certainly unattended with any other danger than that of suffocation. There is, however, one circumstance which appears, at first sight, to corroborate the opinion. The neighbourhood of almost all the lakes in the south of Italy is unwholesome, and recognized,

during the hot season, as visited by the *malaria*. Yet the lakes of Lombardy are not haunted by the pest. How are we to explain this? You will say, perhaps, may it not arise from the greater degree of evaporation in the south, the natural consequence of a hotter sun? To this I answer, "no," because the bad air, in the neighbourhood of the southern lakes, begins as early as the middle or end of May, and it is evident that the sun of Lombardy is, at least, as hot in the month of July as that of Naples in the month of May. Many Italians, therefore, seek to explain the fact, by supposing that the action of water on volcanic soils is productive of pernicious exhalations.

Though I know nothing that confirms this, as I have already said, I am far from venturing to deny it; but were I to theorize on such a ground, I should rather be inclined to attribute the greater disposition to *malaria*, in the southern tracts of Italy, to various causes, acting in combination with those, which are ordinarily productive of it, and, first and foremost, I should place a defective or vicious ventilation.*

At the same time, however, that I am in-

* While this tract is open to the pestilential winds of Africa, it is shut out from the healthy breezes of the north by the double barrier of Alps and Apennines.

clined to disbelieve in volcanic matter being in itself noxious to health, it is possible that it may sometimes contribute indirectly to this effect; for as cinders and pumice often cover waters whose vapours, perhaps, exhale through their crust, they may be accused, at least, of masquing the hostility of more dangerous enemies.

I throw you these notices and leave you to sift them. For myself,

"I cannot bolt this matter to the bran."

In most other cases the causes of bad air are sufficiently obvious, as in tracts once covered by the salt water, which retain, for a considerable time, a disposition to decompose dead vegetable matter—in marshy tracts of whatever description; and in the swampy shores of an inland and tideless sea, that, moreover, occasionally deposits back-waters in the time of wintry tempests; and which, '*onda, dal mar divisa,*' remains unchanged and undiluted, till it is slowly drunk up by a tenacious soil, or absorbed by evaporation.

Another and more general source of bad air may be found in damp woods* not situated on

* But though these may be considered as unwholesome, and, in many places, as a main cause of bad air, it is not always safe to clear them, as they seem, in some instances, to have served as a barrier against its progress; and thus, to the cutting

high lands; and such are always, more or less, unwholesome in hot countries. In proof of this, I recollect, that going with an Italian gentleman, in an open carriage, through the *cascine*,* near Florence, the coachman, who was a foreigner, having driven through an open grove, the ordinary resort of those who take the air on foot or in carriages, was proceeding into a closer part of the wood, when my friend exclaimed, "*Non andar più in la, caro, chè si può dire che costì la febbre sta di casa;*† yet Florence is peculiarly healthy, and almost the only place I know in Italy, where you may venture to sleep with an open chimney in your bed-room.

But I have talked so long of maladies and *malaria*, that you will be inclined to consider these southern regions as little better than a pest-house; yet the danger is nothing to those who are placed above the reach of poverty, and who observe ordinary precautions. Thus I have now

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down the woods, held sacred by the ancient Romans, (probably with a view to their serving this purpose,) has been attributed its rapid invasion of places which were formerly considered as beyond its reach.

* The *cascine*, or dairy-grounds, near Florence, are the sort of Hyde Park of the place.

† My good friend, don't go any farther that way, for one may say that fever lives there.

passed three summers on the shores of the Mediterranean, have occasionally undergone severe fatigues, and in my first campaign, when in possession of my limbs, though in a weak state of health, frequently sate out a southern sun on horseback. With all this I never caught a fever of any description till the other day, and owed this entirely to my neglect of precautions, which long impunity had led me to disregard.

LETTER XI.

On the extreme Misery of the Lower Orders in Italy, &c.

Abano, September, 1817.

BELIEVING my fever to be laid, at least for the present, I remeasured my course, and have again taken soil at Abano. I have always revisited Vicenza with pleasure. Amongst the causes of satisfaction I had formerly found in it, was the comparative absence of that general misery which haunts one's every step in Italy: I, this time, however, saw things sadly changed, and Vicenza may now rank with the other cities of Lombardy in the great and well-balanced scale of universal wretchedness.

As at Padua and elsewhere, you are beset by beggars in coffee-houses, and hung upon in the market-place. Words are wanting to paint the poverty of this people in colours which could give you some idea of the reality. It is a spectre which breaks in upon you in the solitude of the fields, it crosses and blasts you amidst the crowds of gaiety and dissipation.

I mentioned, in my preceding letter, having once found a poor child lying on the ground

under the infliction of an ague fit;* at a little distance was seated a small circle of young children, who were eating a mess of *panada*,† with a single wooden spoon, which circulated, as in the romance of Vathek, round the little group. I conjured this ring of ragged fairies in such terms as I could, and give you the result of the questions and answers.

Is that your brother lying under the sack?

(The eldest.) Yes, sir.

What is the matter with him?

He has the fever, sir.

Why don't you put him in some dry place?

We don't know where to find one, sir.

Why, where do you sleep?

In an empty stable, sir; and I will put him there.

Where are your father and mother?

Our mother is dead, and our father begs, or does such little chance-jobs as offer in the hotel.

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* Since writing this, I have again witnessed a similar fact.

† Bread, boiled in broth or in water, with an infusion of oil or butter. It is the ordinary food of children of all conditions in this country: but for the very young ones, it is usually prepared with oil, (considered as most wholesome,) except in the houses of the peasantry, where the convenience of a cow leads to the use of butter.

And what do you do?

I get up the trees here, and pick vine leaves for the waiters to stop the decanters with, and they give us our *panada.*

I suppose that the strongest abettors of the new opinions, which have acquired such deserved weight in England, would scarcely wish to close the hand of private charity, coming in succour of peculiar cases of distress; yet without some sort of eleemosynary public establishments (and such are wanting in this country) private charity becomes helpless. I could do little more than mend the feast of these poor little wretches, of whom I afterwards ascertained, as I have already mentioned, that five out of seven, were labouring under the same disease.

Had my pecuniary means been adequate to my desire to diminish this mass of misery, how was the thing to be accomplished? I do not believe I could have found a family that would have boarded these melancholy little mendicants, and am quite sure that no one would have had the patience to bear with the waywardness of sickly childhood, or rack their inventions to reconcile and familiarize it to a remedy, against which even the strongest constitutions revolt. In England the parish work-

house, or some neighbouring hospital, would have offered a ready resource.

There are hospitals indeed here, but these are so thinly scattered, (excepting those in the Roman state, which are both numerous and magnificent,) and are administered on such narrow principles exclusive of particular diseases and particular ages, and always turning upon some miserable question of habitancy within very confined limits, that they are usually insufficient to the purposes I have mentioned.*

I am informed that a system, something ap-

* In confirmation of this, I add an after-fact, to which I was a witness in the neighbourhood of Padua. A poor woman had fallen down by the road side in a species of convulsive trance, apparently the consequence of the disease called the *pellagra*, signs of which she still bore about her. I wanted to have her conveyed to a hospital, but she was a stranger, and, I was told, was as such inadmissible. The Italians I had always considered, and I believe with truth, as naturally charitable; but it seemed as if the constant presence of misery had brutalized the Paduans, for at least twenty persons passed by during the time she was struggling with the fit, not one of whom proffered assistance of any sort or kind. At last, I with great difficulty persuaded the owner of a tenement, who lodged poor guests, to take her in for the usual price, till she was in condition to prosecute her journey.

proaching to our mode of providing for the indigent poor, has now been adopted at Venice, where a sort of chest has been formed for their relief, out of contributions levied upon the richer inhabitants, backed by donations from the government. The poor, thus assisted, are assembled in work-houses: those capable of labour are made to contribute to their own support, while those are fed and clothed out of the chest who are unable to do any thing for themselves.

A great change has, in this respect, been wrought in Venice, for, when I knew it three years ago, it was crowded with half-starved wretches; and, as at present in Padua, it was no uncommon thing to find two or three infants sleeping in the open streets.

An adventure of this kind is still present to my memory, and will not be easily effaced. I had supped with a gay party, which had afterwards *adjourned* (for it was now morning) to the public garden. We here broke into pairs and parties, and roamed about, some in the garden, and some along the terrace called the *Riva degli Schiavoni*, which was then ringing with guitars.

By degrees these sounds died away, and all

was silence. The last loiterers had disappeared, and I was accompanying a lady to her house, when we all but stumbled over a little child, perfectly naked, asleep before a door. There was not an appearance of a person being up in Venice. What was to be done? The lady took off her pelisse, wrapt the poor little wretch in it, and left it to the care of Providence.

I saw her some days afterwards, when she told me she had again found the child nearly at the same hour, and in the same place, but without the pelisse.

But now I am on the fertile subject of Venetian recollections, I must tell you two or three more, illustrative of the story of those yet more unhappy times. It was, at that period, no uncommon thing for people to be found dead in the fields, on *terra ferma,* from the consequences of famine, or diseases produced by the unwholesome food with which they sought to supply the place of more natural nourishment; and Venice, as may be naturally supposed, literally swarmed with mendicants of every description.

While the earth at this time denied her fruits, the sea was watched by the Algerines, who, having ceased to tremble at the name of St.

Mark, intercepted trade, and had even disembarked and carried off some peasants as slaves from the neighbourhood of Ancona.

You are aware that it was the common practice of the English to grant passes to ships in the Mediterranean sea, manned by foreigners, but navigated under British colours; and that these passes were an almost infallible protection against the anti-christian cruizers.

The system might be injurious to the interests of Great Britain and incompatible with the policy which she was then vulgarly supposed to act upon, in suffering the existence of the Barbary powers, inasmuch as it allowed the carrying trade of these seas to pass into the hands of others, while it might have been monopolized by herself; but it is difficult to imagine what cause of suspicion an indulgence contrary to the immediate interests of Great Britain, could give to the powers whose subjects enjoyed it. At the epoch of which I am speaking, there were twelve ships, if I recollect rightly, in the port of Venice, furnished with British passes and ready to sail, when an order arrived from Vienna, prohibiting her subjects from embarking '*under other than her own honoured banner*,' and the crews of these twelve ships, (for those only

furnished with our passes could sail with safety) were consequently turned adrift to add to the measure of misery which was running over in the Venetian metropolis.

Yet another sign of these times! A very few days after the appearance of this order, I set out from Venice, on my return to England, but having made a visit to a gentleman who had a country-house in the Veronese, was taken, as you know, dangerously ill. During my attack a servant of this gentleman's, who often assisted my own in his attendance on me, having left me to go to church, I asked him, on his return, the common-place question of what he had heard there: he told me that the newest thing he had heard was a recommendation to eat some kind of outlandish moss, the name of which he could not recollect.

Upon after-inquiry, I found that an address had been published, by order of the Austrian government, from the pulpit, enjoining to the poor, as a substitute for their ordinary food, the use of the *lichen islandicum*, an article only to be procured in the apothecaries' shops, and an ounce of which would probably cost more than a pound of polenta!

Mà d'un parlar nell' altro dove son ito,
Si lungi dal cammin che facev' ora?
Non lo credo però si aver smarrito,
Ch' io non lo sappia ritrovare ancora:
Io dicea—* *Ariosto.*

that all permanent revenues, and public establishments for the maintenance of the poor, are, generally speaking, unknown in Lombardy, and that the poor, in spite of a year of unexampled plenty, swarm in these provinces, beyond what I ever witnessed in any country under the sun. Is this, or is it not, a refutation of the system which has gained such ground in Great Britain?

I feel that I am inadequate to discuss this question; but I should think that it was not. I am inclined to attribute the misery of Italy rather to the effect of the late dreadful war, and long system of oppression under different masters, to the present heavy and ill-devised system of taxes, to their monstrous and expensive mode of collection, but, above all, to the partial imposi-

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But whither have I wander'd from my way,
Thus sliding from one subject to another?
Yet I don't think, I'm gone so far astray,
But what I could the real road recover;
I said—

tion of these burdens; for the taxes falling exclusively upon the landed proprietor, the tenant is wounded through him, and through the tenant the labouring poor. The farmer is too happy if he can live, as it is termed, from hand to mouth, and the rich man if he can yet preserve to himself those luxuries, which are, from habit, become articles of necessity. For works of ornament or improvement he has nothing left, and hence the truest source of relief is cut off from the indigent.

While the solitude of this place (for it is now nearly deserted) has naturally led me into rambles, which have given me more insight into the state of the poor, than a residence in cities, where one has no security against imposture; a local charity, established here by the will of a former possessor, for the purpose of administering the muds and waters in such cases as they may be judged applicable, has also afforded me some information as to several of the most common chronic diseases by which the lower classes are infested.

I had hitherto imagined that those of a scrofulous character were nearly confined to the cold regions of the north, and that Providence, by the gift of a fine climate, had, in a great measure, equalized the condition of rich and

poor, not only with reference to the wants of life, but in keeping off a large and cruel train of diseases.

This may perhaps be so in the more southern parts of Italy, where, as my residence was usually in towns, I had not equal opportunities of investigation; but with regard to these provinces, I find that I was entirely mistaken in my supposition. You do not indeed see so many lame people as in England, but there is an evil here which, in the parliament of diseases, might well pair off either with White-swelling or Ischiasis; though these are maladies not unknown even in the genial climate of Italy. The mischief to which I allude is the *spina ventosa*. In this, perhaps the first intimation which the patient has of an enemy, which 'lays siege to life,' is an inflammation and small hole in the finger. This is a signal to the surgeon to extract a carious bone; and you may frequently observe persons of a lower condition in Italy who have lost a finger-joint through the disease. But it is often not to be appeased by this sacrifice. Unlike the two other diseases, which I have specified, and which, if they are repulsed from their point of attack, break up and retreat, the *spina ventosa* often shifts its quarters, and after nibbling off a thumb, devours a whole arm

without mercy. In such violent cases death often ensues. This disease seems to indicate a general corruption of the system, and though I have been told of some quack remedies for it, I never heard of one that was mentioned even with confidence as a specific.

LETTER XII.

On Italian Games and Cards—Similarity of such all over the World—I set out for Vicenza.

Abano, September, 1817.

I LATELY found myself called upon to make up the single whist party, which Abano could turn out, and on declaring myself ignorant of the game, found I had forfeited the reputation of an educated Englishman. To redeem this, as Sir Toby Belch has it, by policy, I then offered to join another party who were playing at Italian games and with Italian cards.*

I had seen these played with, during a former stay in Italy, but having never attended to them, had to learn a new table of *cups, money, and swords.* These cards are the same as the Spanish, but are of Italian origin; for it is, I believe, agreed, on all hands, to ascribe the invention of printing on wood to the Italians, the merit of this lying between a Sicilian and a

* There are, if I recollect right, three species of Italian cards, though only one is in general use.

Brescian, who both flourished about the beginning of the fourteenth century. As to these two, I am inclined to assign the palm, such as it is, to the Brescian, for a gentleman of Brescia is actually in possession of a series of blocks, the work of his countryman, amongst which are the plates, if I may use the expression, of the Italian and Spanish cards.

To return to my story. Having mastered these elements of science, I found that the important difficulty was vanquished, and that the ground, notwithstanding some slight changes, was already known to me. Thus I recognized *loo* in *pamfil*, and *casino* as we are pleased to call it, in the game of *concina*.

Here I must be permitted a passing observation. We are apt to accuse foreigners of murdering our names and terms. Yet we surely sin as grievously in this way ourselves, and I may say with truth, that not a word crosses the channel,

"But what doth suffer some sea change."

I admit the principle (whether exercised by ourselves or others) of blending foreign words into our own forms and inflections; and I acknowledge *hache pot* and *coulis*, as very properly naturalized into hodge-podge and cullis; but the

particular in which I consider the English as perverse, beyond other nations, is that they change the accent and termination of Italian words upon no principle whatever; but of two sounds usually prefer the wrong, though this may be as little analogous to the genius of their own language as the right. Thus *grotta* is changed into *grotto*, *rotonda* into *rotondo*, while *Gozzo* the sister island of Malta is transmogrified into *Goza*, and the *soubriquet* of the Venetian painter *Canaletto* into *Canaletti*.

Upon this principle, *concina* has been changed into *casino*, and great and little *casino* substituted for the two *commodini*, an expression which is not without meaning, *commodino* signifying in these provinces a convenient friend.

But I soon found, upon further observation of the terms of art, that the stream of invention had, at times, at least, flowed from north to south as well as from south to north, and that, as we capriciously squeezed and cut, so the Italians, but with more of system, stretched recruits to their own national standard. Thus I recognized in *slipi*, *slapi*, *slorum*, *basilorum*, our own *snip*, *snap*, *snorum*, *cockulorum*, which, for the sake of euphony also, I suppose, had been melted into more liquid sounds.

It is with games as with stories and superst-

tions. They are nearly the same all over the world; and so narrow are the bounds which limit human invention, that even where there is no communication, and nations imagine for themselves, there is very little variety in their discoveries.

Thus before *concinna* was imported into England under false colours, we had already anticipated its arrival, and were in enjoyment of the same character of game under the title of *Laugh and lie down.*

It is to illustrate the preceding remark, that I have thrown together these notions; though both the remarks and illustrations may appear unnecessary to you, who have doubtless compared Joe Miller with Athenæus and the *Bibliotheque Orientale d'Herbelôt.*

But the trade which is driven in games, even in countries where there is little other commerce, does not render it necessary for many to tax their proper industry, a reflection which was forced upon me during my residence here. Having 'sounded the very bass string of humility,' and occasionally played at fairs and festivals, at a picturesque sort of little-go, with the clowns and Audreys of the neighbouring village, I had, I believe, lost some dozens of *soldi* before I discovered that I was playing

at *biribi* with the simple substitution of *Harlequin and Columbine* for king and queen, and thus this once illustrious game, the amusement of kings and courts, had wandered from Versailles into a lonely and melancholy village of Lombardy.

Having finished my course of muds, I again left Abano; but considering journies, however short, as usually offering something of adventure, I ought not to change my quarters without mentioning some which befel me on the way, the first of which might have made Don Quixote couch his lance.

I set out from Abano, meaning to make my first halt at Padua, when at a turning of the road, I was surprized by the sound of a trumpet and clatter of hoofs, sounds immediately followed by the charge of an ass-troop, consisting of twenty or thirty great boys making holiday, who had wound their beasts up to a gallop, and

'Came flying as they flogged.'

These Augustan games were led by a young Iülus, I should rather say *Asscanius*, of about eighteen, and presided over by a priest, the master of the school, who seemed to sympathize very heartily in the follies of the day.

The adventure is characteristic of the social spirit which prevails in Italy, where the pedagogue plays with his boys, and the servant is admitted to a most un-English degree of familiarity with his master.

The ass-men had not long passed me, when a sudden storm, like the tempest in the *Flower and the Leaf*, scattered the gallant squadron, who sought such shelter as they could, whilst we, turning into a field, found it under the arcades of a spacious old farm. The master of it observing me reading, with a smile, a large sheet-almanack pasted against the walls, and which, by its prognostics of weather, regulates the rural labours of the Italian farmer, simply remarked—"And yet this very weather is predicted there for to day." An observation which there was no contradicting.

We now fell into conversation upon other topics, and he informed me that he was a tenant under the crown, of forty acres, which formerly composed a conventual farm. If the Austrian government did not choose to assign the confiscated church property (not hitherto applied by France) to the maintenance of public establishments, one can see no reason why it should not have sold, at least, such scattered portions as these, which cannot pay the expense of adminis-

tration, and invested the money resulting from the sale, in the purchase of other and more consolidated estates.

I spent a day and a half at Padua, and concerted measures with a Venetian gentleman, for making an expedition to Vicenza. As we had to transport servants and baggage, we were under the necessity of providing ourselves with carriages adequate to our camp equipage, and went in search of a *vetturino*, or *voiturier*, who would supply us with such.

There is always a swarm of these who ply in every town of Italy, and we soon found a man, who promised every thing we desired. As we took earnest* from him (according to the custom of the country) we did not examine his means of fulfilling the engagement he entered into; but learned early the next morning, by a mere accident, that he was a *vetturino senza vettura*. Wondering how our adventure was to end, but determined, at the worst, to confiscate the rogue's earnest-money, we waited with patience till the appointed hour; when we saw a barouchette, gig,† and cart draw up at the door, with postillions in the imperial livery.

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* *La caparra.* † *Una sedia.*

The *vetturino* had found, it seems, some Vicentine post-boys, who had brought an Austrian Colonel and his baggage to Padua, and engaged them to transport us and our effects in the return carriages to Vicenza.

We set off, perfectly careless as to the arrangement of the vetturino, provided we were delivered at our destination with decent dispatch: but this seemed at first hopeless, for our post-boys proceeded in the thorough spirit of the English recruiting song, of promise to military adventurers,

> 'To stop at every ale-house as ever we comes nigh,
> Till we gets to the wars in North Americky.'

But as ale-houses, or (to speak with more precision) wine-houses are scattered somewhat more thickly on the road from Padua to Vicenza than they can be supposed to be in the Atlantic ocean, our arrival at the latter city appeared to be problematical.

At length however, we made such vigorous remonstrances that the post-boy who drove our carriage, assured us, if we would allow him to stop at the *Zoco*, a little inn, about ten miles from Padua, we should not have to complain of further interruptions: we agreed very willingly to

to this compromise; but after having made a long stay at the abovementioned place and again set out, the compact was violated by the other postillions, who denied, afterwards, having been parties to the convention.

In short we had not proceeded three miles further before we again came to a dead halt. Out of all patience, we got out of the carriage, and having made our way to the kitchen, found that these considerate persons had bespoke a piece of raw meat, which was at that moment putting down to roast. Our surprize at their intention was a subject of much coarse merriment to all present; but indignation now supplied us, in our turn, with such a flow of words, that our post-boys gave way under the volley and remounted their horses.

But though they allowed us to carry our point, they did not strike without pouring in a vigorous fire for the honour of their flag. In this they were backed by the whole kitchen-militia of the wine-house, and we set out amidst a hubbub of halloos, hoots, threats, and execrations.

We consoled ourselves under this mortification, with the resolution of disinheriting our post-boys, but we managed matters ill; for amidst the confusion, which necessarily results from a variety of money, some of which has

materially changed its nominal value, and is every week undergoing variation,* my friend,

* The slow and natural fluctuation of the value of the precious metals is a trifling inconvenience, compared with the sudden and unnatural variations produced by the arbitrary acts of the Austro-Italian government, which issues weekly, what is called here a *listino*, regulating the precise value of the current coins. The following anecdote may illustrate the principles on which this *listino* is founded. I went one day into a shop in Venice, and having no livres, offered an *Aquilone*, a large silver piece, for change and payment: I received less in return than I conceived was due; but found the return was according to the new regulations of the weekly *listino*. On inquiring into the cause of the government having voluntarily and unnecessarily (as it appeared) depreciated the *Aquiloni*, beyond what was their received value, I was informed that it was with the view of forcing into circulation the smaller coins which were scarce, and supposed to be purposely kept back. Upon this supposition, then, they depreciated the *Aquilone*, calculating people would not part with it at a loss, arguing that the act of the government could not succeed long in debasing it beyond its real worth, and in the mean time, for the immediate exigencies of the day, would produce their smaller coin. Every hour which one passes in this country rivets *Oxernstein*'s observation of 'how little wisdom goes towards the government of this world.' But perhaps the allowing a little more or less value to coin, which is in itself base (and such is all the money in the Austro-Italian states), appears a small matter to the Austrian government; and of less consequence because it does not take it itself; resembling the razor maker, who never shaved

in discharging their legitimate claims, paid them six Venetian livres too much.

They were gone before we discovered our mistake; but, as we were somewhat angry, and as one does not think so lightly of small money in Italy as in England, the Venetian, and myself, the appropriate representative of vindictive justice, as blind and lame, though alas! not 'even-handed,' set off in pursuit of the delinquents. We overtook them near the post-house, and as they were in the act of dividing the spoil, which, to my surprize, they restored without a debate.

But the thing was speedily explained. By the posting regulations, postillions are forbid to convey travellers or luggage by return horses and carriages, under heavy penalties, and these men therefore besought us that we would not occasion their ruin, by denouncing them at the post-house. Yet had they insulted us in a most outrageous manner, only an hour before, though they knew that they lay under the

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with his own razors. Taxes and public debts are paid in French money, i. e. franks or Napoleons. A partizan of Austria tells me that this is in order to call in, and re-cast the French money. Such an end is no doubt rational, and in every way desirable; but let Austria, in the vulgar phrase, *give as good as is brought*, and, while she recalls good money from circulation, not inundate her provinces with adulterated silver.

lash of the law, and that one word from us would be sufficient to make it fall upon their backs.

I have occasionally conversed with persons in England, who seem to think,

'Che un assoluto dispotico governo
È buono per la state e per l'inverno.'*
Casti.

and, as a set-off for its alleged evils, talk of the quiet, the decency, and the decorum, which they suppose to be its natural consequences. I wish these gentlemen would take the trouble of trying the truth of their theory, and pass a few months on the continent, in order to see how it tallies with practice.

I have known several Italians and other foreigners, who have passed some time in England, and though many of them were shocked and frightened at tumults, which they had not learned to consider as the great safety-valves of our political machinery, as somebody has called them, I never knew one, who was not struck by the superior order of the English people in times of political calm, as compared with that of all the other nations of Europe.

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* Who praise despotic government, and swear,
'Tis stuff for summer, or for winter wear.

For it would be a very narrow view of the subject to suppose that the decency of our people was to be only contrasted with the licentiousness of the Italians. Let us pass from Italian to German postillions, (let it be always recollected that these are, on the continent, the servants of the sovereign, and subject to rigorous regulations,) and I believe it would not be too much to say that every traveller's note book is full of instances of their brutality. Take only one which happened to an English nobleman, employed diplomatically, and whose character puts him above the suspicion of his having lightly committed himself "in the streets, desperate of shame and state, in private brabble."

This person, travelling officially, was deprived of his horses, which were destined for another, though against the most pointed regulations of the government, printed and suspended in the post-house; and was actually obliged to right himself by force, he having to engage in regular battle, at the head of his suite, with all the ragamuffins of the place.

To return to English decencies; that rational subordination, that nice observance in not encroaching, without provocation, upon a superior rank, and the payment of the deference which is due to it from us, often excites the surprize,

not to say the contempt, of foreigners: even in cases where the claim is indisputable.

I recollect, that in the time of Murat, walking, one day, with a Neapolitan noble, the king, preceded by his guards, came suddenly upon us. I did what I suppose every Englishman would have done in such a case; I stopt and took off my hat, which I did not replace till the royal carriage had gone by—"And you are an Englishman," was the exclamation of the Neapolitan, "and yet you have done what the veriest courtier here would hesitate at."

I remember, on a different occasion, being asked by a lady, the friend of another who was to give an entertainment to the Princess of Wales, whether any particular etiquette was to be observed upon the occasion. I told her, I was very ill read in such matters, but that I conceived it would be right for the master of the house to comply with the most marked of our observances, upon such an occasion; and receive her Royal Highness at the door, with a pair of candles in his hand. The reply I received was: "And what Italian gentleman, do you imagine, would do this? But I was not *commissioned* to ask you the question, so that the thing is of no consequence."

LETTER XIII.

Variety of Character in the Italian Provinces—discernable in their Kitchens—The Kitchen affords a Clue to national Origin—Absence of Prejudice in Matters of Food amongst the Italians—Vicentine Anecdotes, &c.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

THOUGH a stranger, on his first arrival, sees a general moral resemblance in the great Italian family, a little observation is sufficient to convince him that every province has a physiognomy of its own.

It is not indeed extraordinary that the Venetians should differ from the Paduans, because we know, that the former are a pure breed; since, though the islands of the Lagoon were peopled at various eras, the accessions which they received, were all of Roman race, or at least unmixed by any influx of the barbarians; but that Padua should differ from Vicenza, appears inexplicable. Yet I could say with truth, that, if we except the resemblance of dialect, and some community of trifling customs, Calais and Dover are not more unlike than these two towns, long subjected to the same government, and con-

nected by facilities of communication, both by land and water.*

To say nothing of the *exteriorities* of the two cities, (to borrow a useful Italian expression) which present the most remarkable contrast, it would seem as if the inhabitants were of different blood,—as if a colony of Venetians, making a knight's move, had leaped over Padua, and established themselves at Vicenza, taking perhaps something of a new colouring from the change.

As you enter the Vicentine state, you may observe a visible improvement in the mode of cultivation. The fields are kept cleaner, and every thing indicates superior industry and exactness. This does not, however, extend very far; and as you leave the Veronese, you perceive, that, though you have turned your back upon Padua, you are approaching *alios elephantes*—the lumbering Lombard inhabitants of the Milanese.

The marked difference between the natives of the Italian provinces is to be traced in the smallest things, even to varieties in their kitchen, though

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* The *Bacchiglione*, a navigable stream, (the *Medoacus minor* of the ancients,) which flows through Vicenza, runs into the *Brenta* (the *Medoacus major*) before its arrival at Padua.

this is fundamentally the same throughout. Thus maccheroni forms the favourite pottage * of the Neapolitans, and rice that of the Venetians, and many towns have their peculiar species of paste, which seldom strays beyond the frontier. The great national link is Parmesan cheese, which always crowns the mess.

You are learned, I know, in national monuments—Now will the kitchen illustrate the origin of these different people?

We may observe that the customs of the kitchen are amongst the most permanent of national habits. Thus I have been assured that the emigrants from Suffolk are to be distinguished from the other colonies of north America, by their pudding-eating propensities, which I dare say, they inherited at first hand from their Anglo-Saxon ancestors, and I suppose that even the squab-pye of Devonshire, were the pursuits of our antiquarian society rationally conducted, might be traced up to the heroic ages of the Heptarchy.

A learned and ingenious friend observes that Greek colonies, wherever they have been planted, have introduced the passion for cheese as a

* *Minestra.*

principal ingredient in cookery. The fact, as far as my observation extends, is true, though I never yet met with it in negus, as Nestor and Machaon drank it. But cheese seems to have spread from the Greeks to the Romans, is general throughout Italy, and, as I said before, is the great bond of union between her various kitchens.*

But, though these are, with this exception, distinguished by some particularity, they are all founded on liberal maxims, and while they allow the principle of preference, never admit that of exclusion: for every fowl that flies and every fish that swims, is meat in Italy; whilst on the contrary, some of the greatest delicacies which sea and air offer, are rejected by us.

Amongst these I should class all small birds, which are here dignified by the appellation of birds *of the gentle beak*,† such as thrushes, robin-red-breasts, as contra-distinguished from sparrows

* Evelyn, I believe, observes that he could travel blind-folded through Italy, and recognize each city by its peculiar smell. But here again there is a principle of assimilation: for garlick is the key-note to all these stinking variations.

† In addition to the fig-pecker or *beccafico*, they acknowledge as luxuries *uccelletti del becco gentile*; but eat even sparrows and chaffinches.

and others which may be said to be of the *burgher beak.*

One of the good things, which we, under the influence of the strange levitical law we have imposed upon ourselves, cast away as unclean, is the cuttle-fish, justly esteemed one of the luxuries of the Italian table. This when large is cut into strips and fried; and when small, stewed in its own ink and oil, with the addition of some slight condiment.

I will not deny that the first sight of this dish somewhat discouraged me; but I may say I ate the black broth with pleasure, without having bathed in the Adriatic: for I vanquished my prejudice the first day I arrived at Venice.

Nor is this fish better in the Mediterranean than in the ocean, for I have eaten it in perfection in England, though I verily believe at the risque of losing my cast, and being looked upon as something monstrous and unchristened, by the fishermen who brought it me. The best proof however which could be given of the absence of those eating prejudices, which are so strong in England, is perhaps the general diffusion of potatoes.* This root was, two years ago, a

* Potatoes however can never become as popular as with us, as the people are already provided with an equivalent in

thing of rare occurrence in this country, and is now to be seen in profusion, in every market place of Italy.

But in fact, the disposition of the Italians to turn all things to account, is yet more strongly marked with respect to the vegetable than to the animal kingdom; for the earth scarcely yields a herb, which he does not press into his sallad. In Tuscany a species of horse-chesnut* is made into bread, and forms the main provision of the mountain population: which recurs to still worse diet in years of scarcity; and the stranger, who wanders into the house of one of these highlanders, may then see oak and chesnut leaves boiling for the use of the family.

This spirit of generalization, in the article of food, seems to descend from man to beast. The dog will often eat chesnuts, grapes and rice, and seems to consider nothing foreign from his nature, which is convertible into chyle or *album græcum.* I should, indeed, almost say that the principle pervaded all the links of nature, even

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rice or Indian corn. Besides which, neither the climate nor the soil of Italy seems to be generally adapted to the cultivation of this root. I should however except mountain tracts, and I recollect eating the most delicious I ever tasted, at *Vallombrosa.*

* *La castagna. Il marrone* is our *sweet* chesnut.

to the very insects of Italy. For on my short journey from Padua hither, I observed my poodle extremely distressed, and scratching himself, more than he would have done under the ordinary visitation of fleas: I called him to me, and found him full of forest flies,* which had bedded themselves in his coat. This insect is, you know, only to be found on horses, with us. Here he seems to consider all quadrupeds as his own.

I went last night to the opera, and witnessed three things which were new to me. The first was the fact of the *prima donna* being the wife of a Bergamasque Marquis, and being suffered by him to continue on the stage under her maiden name. This sort of marriage is not uncommon in Italy; the second part of the story I should imagine is considered almost as scandalous here as it would be with us.

Another woman performed the part of *soprano*, with a voice that could scarcely be distinguished from those of that description.

Wonder the third was the sight of several poodles, seated in the pit. These were allowed

* This anecdote may also serve to shew the quantity of wood in Lombardy, though it exists only in rows of trees which divide or intersect the several fields, and is not certainly to be seen in mass between Vicenza and Padua.

a voice as well as seat in that august assembly, provided however that they conformed to the opinions of the majority. But for this you will perhaps find a parallel short of Vicenza.

I must tell you that I have had another attack of intermittent fever, and I communicate this not only as illustrative of what I said before, that when you have once let this pest into the garrison, no precautions are sufficient to prevent a return; but also that it may serve as a sort of apology for the random stuff which I am inditing. If therefore you are disposed to scout this, have the charity to suppose that "the fit is upon him," and, therefore, "the poor monster does not talk after the wisest."

LETTER XIV.

Palladian Architecture—Mechanical Arts in Italy cultivated with less Success than the liberal—Mistaken Notion of despotic Government being peculiarly unfavourable to the latter—Perverseness of the Austrian Government in various Respects.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

When I first saw Vicenza I was fresh from Sicily and its ruins, and I remember thinking somewhat lightly of the architectural treasures which this city contains. After-visits have induced me to change my opinion; though I do not feel that untempered veneration for the works of Palladio which is universally professed in Italy.

There are undoubtedly many obvious deformities in his architecture; defects which, I should think, might offend even the eyes of those who acknowledge the legitimacy of the school. Amongst these I should place his high and hideous roofs, that often look like hutches for his statues, which appear to have

'Stept *to* their pedestals to take the air,'

in the full confidence of having a sufficient re-

treat behind them. This defect may be observed in many of his buildings, and particularly in the *Salone* of Vicenza; though perhaps this should hardly be cited in evidence against him, as it was a *rifacciamento*, and its faults may be the blunders of its founder.*

I might add various abuses of decoration, as exemplified in ornaments, which have neither use, meaning, nor beauty, of which I shall, however, only mention one, which strikes me as the most clumsy ever contrived; I mean those heavy architraves with which he has thought it necessary to crown all his windows; an ornament which offends from the perverse variety which he observes in them. I never see two windows with these ugly alternations, as those, for instance, of his disciple at Whitehall, but it forces upon me the image of a person under an attack of paralysis, with one eyebrow quiescent in its accustomed curve, and the other screwed up into a triangle.

In fine, I allow that Palladio has his faults; and it is certainly true, that blots in architecture,

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* What however seems contrary to this supposition is, that Inigo Jones considered it worthy imitation, as may be seen in our *Vitruvius Britannicus*, in a design given, I think, as the elevation of a house for the Duke of Argyle.

painting, or sculpture, as weighed against beauties, tell more in the scale than in that of the more intellectual arts. In the best poetry, for example, we can generally omit or remodel what we dislike, (whether ill or well,) according to our own fancy, except in those few cases where excellencies and defects are chemically united; but in architecture, to use a phrase strictly parliamentary, there is no *blinking* blunders, we *must* see every thing, good or bad, and drink the potion which is set before us to the dregs.

But though the errors of the architect and the painter take more from *their* beauties than those of the poet or historian do from *theirs*, it must be acknowledged that such a maxim is less applicable to the elaborate school of architecture to the others; and this because the eye fatigues itself in the maze of parts, and in the end reposes upon the mass. Of this the interior of St. Peter's at Rome is a most striking example, for whilst we look with disgust upon many of its parts, who but yields to the impression of the whole? Now, judged by the general result of his works, Palladio must surely be ranked high, even by those who are disgusted by his defects. His imagination is boundless, or is only to be equalled by his ingenuity in disposing

of the stores with which his fancy has furnished him. He has indeed more of the magician than the builder, and I am persuaded, that had he lived in the days of the Fata Morgana, she would have employed him as chief architect, both for her palaces and *casinos*. Indeed the *open-work** and *frost-work*, in which he sometimes deals, seem admirably fitted for her enchanted garden.

This school appears to me to be much better calculated for gay and crowded cities than that which forms the admiration of certain select circles at home, and I cannot partake in the contempt which I have heard expressed at the character of what has been adopted in our new streets, though I do not hold it the best sample of the sort, and, considering the beginnings I have seen, as an imitation of *Piranesi*, think

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* What I venture to designate by this name is, I confess, sometimes disagreeable to the eye, as in the *Salone* of this city, which is pierced all over with arches and smaller apertures; but the effect of Palladio's arcades, both at top and bottom, in the courts of palaces is beautiful.

I do not throw out a conjecture why what is pretty in one case, is not in another, being entirely of the opinion of a friend, who considers taste as a passive quality. There is undoubtedly a reason for every thing, but in snatching at this eel, we are continually catching it by the tail instead of by the head.

a much better model might have been found in *Palladio.*

My preference of this species for the decoration of a capital, rests upon many grounds, though I do not know whether you will consider these as more stable than the foundation has been of some of the edifices which have furnished me with my illustration. My first and main reason is, that the Grecian school, allowing it, as I freely do, to be superior, is to be considered as the blank verse of architecture, and not within the reach of the many. The Italian is infinitely more popular. Then surely, when you are catering for the people at large, some deference is to be shewn for their taste and predilections.

The superiority of the Italian school to the other seems also to me to be manifest in what respects use and comfort, for except they may serve for churches or town-halls, to what purpose can the buildings of the Grecian be rationally applied?

Another powerful objection, in my eyes, to the Grecian architecture, is, that to be seen to advantage, it requires a certain 'pride of place;' while the Italian accommodates itself to its situation, and often (as may be seen in some Palladian buildings here) changes and modifies its proportions according to the distance from which they are to be viewed.

The Grecian indeed is like a picture painted with bold strokes; it must not be approached too nearly by the spectator; above all, it loses its pretensions to dignity, if crowded on by neighbouring buildings, and derives its chiefest charm from insulation. We choose generally to suppose, that this is a grace conferred by time upon such edifices, and, no doubt, this *has* shed an air of majesty about those of Pæstum, Girgenti, &c. which has greatly added to the imposing effect naturally inherent in them. But if examined in their original state and situation, we shall find that their architects acknowledged and acted upon the principle of insulation; and this they observed, not like modern English artists, according to a few technical rules, and by a space of a few inches, but in a marked and decided manner; as apparent to the eye of the peasant as to that of the artist. Thus, to draw an example from the country in which I am writing, the small Grecian temple at Pompeja is not only detached from the surrounding houses by the spacious void which is about it, but the effect is also seconded by its being raised by steps, and by its being of a size and altitude infinitely superior to the neighbouring buildings, which appear, by comparison, the dwellings of Lilliputians.

We may say, perhaps with truth, that one of the best specimens of the Grecian school which we have in England has failed of its effect from the neglect of this important principle: I speak of the master's lodge of Downing College, Cambridge. This is in itself beautiful; and it is technically insulated, or (to speak more pedantically) its figure is acknowledged, but, to say nothing of the houses which are too near it, (a thing which might have been guarded against, by placing it at a distance from the extremity of the field in which it is situated,) it is absolutely elbowed and overlaid by the long front and lofty roof of the building in which the fellows are kept.

As a proof that this is no forced view of the thing, I shall adduce the effect produced by it upon my servant, who had accompanied me in a voyage up the Mediterranean and Archipelago. His exclamation on seeing it was: "Lord, sir, if it don't look like one of them old temples we used to see, with a parcel of officers' barracks clapt on against it!"

An Italian architect would not have displayed the correct taste of the very ingenious person employed on this edifice. But he has too much picture in his soul to have committed a similar blunder. The Italians are indeed altogether a

much more picturesque people than ourselves, and are, if I may use the expression, *instinctively* picturesque. Hence we see a continued flight at architectural ornament in miserable buildings in Italy, while in like attempts the sickly taste of the Englishman and Swiss usually breaks out into white walls and pea-green windows and pales. Indeed it would be hardly going too far to say that the Italians are, collectively and individually, an architectural people.

As a proof of their passion for this art, what other small city, out of Italy, could produce so many magnificent monuments as are to be seen here; and almost all furnished by the munificence of her private citizens?

This taste is certainly, as I have said, in a great degree, natural; but something is to be given to education, and it may be remarked, that architecture is often cultivated in Italian colleges, as drawing is taught in our own places of education.

But fond as the Italians are of architecture, they are deplorably ignorant of all that is subservient to it. Indeed here, as in all other cases, the most singular contrast exists between the cultivation of the liberal and the mechanical arts. The finest palaces are often lighted with leaden

casements. Modern buildings indeed have sash-windows; but here magnificent panes of glass are held by the wood-work; for, though employed in the adjoining countries of Germany and Switzerland, the use of putty is unknown in Italy.

The cause of the different success with which the liberal and mechanical arts are now cultivated here opens a curious field for inquiry. Is it because the Italian prefers the ornamental to the useful, like the French boy in the story, who, being without breeches, and becoming master of a crown, laid it out in the purchase of a feather? Without discarding this motive a more satisfactory reason may perhaps be adduced in explanation of the fact. The concurrence of a few rich persons is sufficient to give encouragement to the sculptor, the painter, and the architect, while the carpenter, the cutler, and the shoemaker depend upon the many. But the many are, and have long been, crushed in Italy; while a few princes, or counts, or cardinals, have always existed, who could have given, and now give, a thousand *louis-d'or* for a statue to the Canova of the day. Hence, perhaps, it is, that in a country where they build in marble, you cannot buy a pair of shoes which will last you for a month.

I must not dismiss this subject without remark-

ing on the contradiction, which Italy affords to the position, that despotic government is destructive to the fine arts. Despotic government is (administered as it usually is) prejudicial to art and science of whatever character; but it is the fine arts which usually suffer least, because these are under the immediate protection of the administrators of the despotism which overlays the others.

To pass from arts to artists: I shall give you an anecdote, which forms at present, a common topic of conversation in this place. A certain architect, called *Malacarne*, of reputation in his calling, and who has, I believe, nothing against him but his name, was sometime ago constituted by the German government principal architect for the town; a salary was assigned him, and this, in a short space of time was doubled. Ten days afterwards he was deprived of it and turned adrift.

But you will say there may have existed sufficient cause for this, though it may not have been declared. Agreed: but it is so entirely of a piece with the general conduct of the Austrians, that I cannot give them credit for having acted upon due consideration, furnished as my memory is with similar recollections as to every description of posts, which they have had to fill

or empty in the unfortunate countries subjected to their dominion.

> But where examples are well chosen,
> One is as valid as a dozen.

Take one: the Austrians, on recovering possession of Venice, dismissed the judges of all the principal tribunals. They then composed them of a sort of wine and water mixture of half Germans and half Venetians. They next remodelled them afresh, and cast them all German. How happily does Dante's accusation of Florence apply to this government, and how justly might one object to the emperor,

> ——— " ch' a mezzo Novembre
> Non giunge quel che tu d'Ottobre fili."*

The French were also undoubtedly obnoxious to this accusation, but, with them, it was a necessary consequence of the promptitude of their decisions. The Austrian cabinet unites the two rare and opposite vices of being slow to resolve and quick to alter.

But now I am on subjects of government, I ought to observe that a considerable change has

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* ——————— the thread you spin
Scarce reaches from October to November.

been effected in Vicenza since my last visit, and that the shoals of beggars have visibly diminished. On inquiry into the cause, I find the *foreign* poor, i. e. the poor of the neighbouring cities, towns, and villages, have been sent away. No provision, however, has been made for those of the place, unless the investing them with a sort of medal, which justifies their begging in the streets, may be considered as such.

I mentioned, in a former letter, what was, I thought, sufficient to explain the misery of this people; but new lights break in upon me at every moment—lights, however, which only serve to make darkness visible.

Whilst I was living at inns, I was necessarily ignorant of many things, which, when established as a housekeeper, were forced upon my attention; and you will imagine my surprize when, looking into the prices of eatables, I found there was a *maximum* upon almost every thing, grounded upon conjectural valuation. Thus, in Vicenza and elsewhere, once a month, appears a tariffe, termed *Calamiere* in the barbarous Italian of this country, which orders the proprietor to sell his bread, meat, oil, &c., at a given price, to the retailer, and the retailer again to distribute it, at a fixed rate, to the consumer.

If the madness of the system of the *maximum*

was not self-apparent, and had not been proved during the reign of Robespierre in France, one should have thought that the prices of their own markets might have taught these legislators wisdom: every thing that cannot come within their regulation is cheap, and almost every thing on which they have put a *maximum* is dear. Thus, whilst an English pound of beef cost eight pence, I have literally bought a couple of woodcocks for twenty-five pence English, in the market; and the *current* price of a fatted capon was nearly the same. A like disproportion may be observed throughout between articles of luxury and of prime necessity, such as wine, oil, bread, and meat, which are regulated by, or supposed to be regulated by, the *Calamiere*.

I say, supposed to be regulated; because, though this may, in fact, operate mischievously in inducing the producer to keep back his produce, or by the various modes of trouble which it throws in the way of the retailer, it can never enforce articles good in their kind being actually sold at the price which is thus regulated. I go to an oilman and tell him to give me a pound of oil. When we come to the question of payment, he demands double what is fixed by the *Calamiere*. I plead this; but my friend replies, "Take the oil I give you," (and he offers me.

something worse than train-oil,) " and you shall have it at the price you mention; but if you want *luxuries* you must pay for them."

It is the same with every thing else. We may say then, that it does not even produce the immediate good at which it aims, whilst its more remote and incidental effects must be evident to every one but an Austrian.

LETTER XV.

Extraordinary View from the MONTE *of Vicenza, &c.*

Vicenza, October, 1817.

AMONGST the many recommendations of Vicenza may be reckoned the neighbourhood of a mountain, called here, *par excellence, Il Monte.* It is accessible in different parts; that by the *Porta Lupia* is the most agreeable. You ascend it on this side by an easy inclined plain, broken here and there, like a staircase, by landing places, and under the cover of porticos, which extend the greatest part of the height, reaching from near the foot of the hill to the Palladian church, dedicated to the *Madonna di Monte*, a distance of at least half a mile.*

The view from this side of the hill is extraordinary. I have already mentioned the enormous flats common in Italy, but this is one which exceeds (to use a Johnsonian expression) one's

* Similar works, extending from a city to some neighbouring church in reputation for sanctity, are not uncommon in Italy. There are porticos at Bologna, which, as here, climb a hill; I should think, from recollection, of more than this extent.

utmost notion of potentiality of plain; and though I cannot wholly subscribe to the German's creed, who, having been shewn Mount Edgecombe, and magnificently entertained with sea-fish, exclaimed, "*Pour moi, j'aime les pays plats, et les poissons d'eau douce,*" I shall have a greater respect for plains for the remainder of my life, whatever I may think of fresh-water fish.

Imagine to yourself an enormous flat which presents something like the shape of a bow, the arc of which is formed by various mountains, that are apparently united. Facing the north, you have to the west, but at an immense distance, the mountains of *Friuli;* to the east are the *Euganean* hills, and to the south, with his back to which the spectator stands, (and this forms the central part of the arc, with a projection towards the chord,) are the *Colli Berici*, or Vicentine hills, which appear to be an offset from the Alps. These seem from behind to join the *Euganean* and *Este* hills, and the mountains of the *Friuli.* All is plain between these and the chord; that is to the utmost extent of the visible horizon, unbroken by the slightest apparent undulation of surface, and rich in wood, vineyards, and in grain. To give you something of a more accurate idea of the extent of this, I shall select

the part I am best acquainted with, and which I have measured in my own person—I mean the space which lies between this place and Padua, a plain every part of which is visible to the naked eye in ordinary weather. This, by the road, which is sufficiently straight, is distant eighteen Italian or English nautical miles (that is 60 to a degree.) Allowing, therefore, two for deviations (and the road is remarkably straight) they might yield twenty of ours in a level line. But I do not think I exaggerate, in saying that very many lines, drawn from the center of the arc to the chord, would be of equal length with that which extends from hence to Padua.

I have not travelled a great deal in England, and therefore am not qualified to say, with confidence, that no such tract of plain exists there; but the only one of great prolongation in a straight line, which ever fell under my own observation, is that which extends from London to Egham Hill—a very great distance it is true, and not very far short of this. But a slight deviation to right or left presents you with a variety of surface, such as the neighbourhood of Richmond.

In Italy these flats are frequent, and from the top of the cathedral at Milan, the eye may wander, on all sides, over a plain which is only terminated by the horizon.

When you have wearied your sight with the northern view, take post on the western side, and you have again a perfect plain, but of no great extent for this country; this is bounded by mountains; and in it lies the city of Vicenza, presenting a figure something like that of a crab.

The north offers the most extraordinary contrast to the south, for you have here a sea of mountains which, in appearance, runs as far as the Alps. These, till they swell in the distance into too great a height, are covered with vineyards which might redeem Lombardy from the reproach of infamous wines.*

* The badness of the wine in Lombardy is usually attributed to the height to which the vines are suffered to grow, whereas, in all other wine countries, with the exception of Italy, I believe, they are seldom allowed to rise above the height of three or four feet. There is no doubt that all fruit trees ripen their fruit better near the ground, perhaps because of the more powerful reflection of the heat, and because the sap rises to a certain height in greater abundance and force. But a departure from this system will not serve to explain the badness of Lombard wines, because those of Tuscany, though there is no great difference in the mode of cultivation, are perfectly delicious. The real cause appears to be, that the fields of Lombardy are composed of alluvial soil, much too rich and well watered for the vine, which loves a dry soil and particularly affects rocks and declivities. Hence

Bacchus amat colles.

On the top of the *Monte* is a casino belonging to a Vicentine countess, the opposite windows of

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has passed into a proverb and many places in Italy attest his taste. Of this, not to speak of Tuscany, Vicenza itself is a striking example; and, indeed, in every spot where good wine is to be had, this will be found to be the produce of the hills. For instance, I know but four wholesome species of what I call table-wine in Lombardy; the first is the Vicentine, at least in my estimation; the second, a stronger wine, is produced near Verona; the third is grown on the Euganean hills; and the fourth, which I have met with at inns, on the border towards Piedmont, is called *il vin rosso delle colline*—a denomination which speaks for itself.

There are few strong wines grown in Lombardy; but these when kept long enough are excellent, as the *piccolit* of Friuli and the *Vino di Breganza*. Most of the others are what is called in Italian, *vini da pasto*, or *vini da pasteggiare*; that is, wine to be drunk at meals, like our beer; for the Italians are not much addicted to strong or foreign wines, which are only to be met with in the houses of the *stravicchi*, or over rich, and are even there insufferably bad. They are, perhaps, right in their fear of strong wines, as there is no doubt that all strong liquors are more prejudicial to the health in hot countries than in cold. But good and evil are more complicated than we are, at first sight, disposed to admit, and the dangers of *acid* may, perhaps, be set against those of *alchohol*.

To return to Italian wines, and to the Tuscan in particular, nothing is more delicious than what is in that country called the *vino usuale di Firenze*, and which in Florence, when good, and two years old, seldom costs more than two pence a bottle. This I should prefer even to the *Montepulciano*, termed by Redi, the King of Wines, and, indeed, to all the others specified in his

whose saloon command this extraordinary prospect, north and south. The *Monte* is, indeed, the

dithyrambics. But neither those of the first, or even of a secondary description, will bear carriage; and the Tuscan wine, whether drunk in Rome or in London, has a taste perfectly distinct from what it has in Florence. I was assured, by all of whom I inquired on this subject, that the wine exported was universally *governato*—a term which, in Florentine, corresponds with our expression of doctored. A person, however, was at last recommended to me, as skilled in the management of wine, who told me that he would furnish me with some, of which I should first approve the quality, which would bear being transported to any part of Italy. I agreed to try the experiment, without much confidence in its success; but I was agreeably disappointed, and found my wine as pure at Venice as I could have drunk it at the fountain-head of Florence. This man, who was a Vicentine, long established there, assured me that his own country wine, which is at present little inferior, might be rendered much superior to the best *vino usuale* of Tuscany. The worst property of this is its extreme delicacy, already exemplified in its not bearing carriage. This is, indeed, such, that if you take the oil from the top of the flask which contains it, and leave it open for an hour, the nectar becomes absolutely vapid.

It may be remarked, that amongst the various points of contrast which distinguish modern from ancient Italy, that is not the least which regards the management of wines; for if we suspect the truth of some of the statements made by Pliny, which, I should imagine, could scarcely be reconciled with the maxims of modern chemistry, there are other stories, not subject to the same objections, in which such a swarm of ancient writers concur, that it would be rejecting all principles of evi-

favourite country residence of the Vicentine gentry, and is covered with their seats and casinos. Amongst these is the famous *rotonda* of

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dence to question their authenticity. Take, for instance, the numberless testimonies respecting the Falernian wine, which we are told, if I recollect right, required thirty or forty years to bring it to perfection, while it was capable of being preserved, perhaps, for as many more. Now the grape which is at present cultivated on the same spot that produced this wonderful wine, so vaunted both for its flavour and its body, yields a juice which cannot rank with English small-beer of the most ordinary pretensions. It has, indeed, when new, one point of similitude to the ancient, i. e. its harshness; but it is too short-lived to correct its vices, and will not, I believe, keep above two years.

As for the wine, however, which is made on the plains of Lombardy, I *suspect* this could never have been good, even in the time of the Romans, who cultivated the vine in the same manner as their descendants do now; nor can I conceive the possibility of its being successfully cultivated on these flats. It is possible that the shade of the trees to which it is married, may be some impediment to the ripening of the grapes; but I am not sure that the height to which the vine is suffered to grow, may not obviate, in some degree, the evil consequences of the soil, whose rank luxuriance may thus be diverted from the fruit to the foliage. This is not a mere gratuitous theory; for a Lombard farmer once assured me, that he had kept the vine low; but that the grape juice was in consequence spoilt. At any rate, as I have already said, it is certain that the ancient Italians used the same method of cultivation, and much is to be presumed in favour of a practice which has lasted above 2000 years.

Palladio; of which I am the less tempted to speak in detail, as we have more than one *fac simile* of it at home. But the principal one may serve to confirm the observation made in a former letter, i. e. that we carry no poetry into our architecture. The noble copyist was, no doubt, a man greatly skilled in the art, and the court of Burlington-house is a lasting monument, both of his science and his imagination; but to move an airy Palladian palace from the skirts of a mountain, and let it fall upon a flat, would seem to savour of the undistinguishing property of fetching and carrying houses, which distinguished the familiar genius of the lamp.*

Here the four portals of the *rotonda* command four distinct views, and, ensuring ventilation during the heats, perhaps justify a mode of construction which appears, at first sight, rather calculated for a temple of the winds than the residence of one "inland bred;" but this edifice, if its character can be defended by circumstances of place and climate in Italy, has not an excuse for being found in England. Palladio, indeed, himself, considering the severity

* An Italian wisely considers the architecture of a house as connected with its position; precisely as he meditates a picture with reference to the light in which it is to be placed.

of the winter in Lombardy, seems to have been too little studious of comfort; but I cannot believe that had he planned houses for us, he would have built all his rooms in a manner to ensure a constant thorough-draught of air.

The various seats and casinos, on this hill, are, it is hardly necessary to observe, in a very different style from ours, having always something of festive and ornamental in their composition: but these villas differ from ours in nothing more than in the disposition of their gardens and grounds. In an elevated situation like this, the formal garden, known by the designation of architectural, is sometimes inclosed with a wall too low to impede the view; in ordinary situations the wall is usually higher; but, as the Italian seems to consider a garden, merely open at top, as we do a room lit only by a skylight, he usually, besides an iron gate, the spikes of which are often gilt like those of the gardens of the Thuilleries, breaks out two or three windows in the wall. These, which are of course unglazed, are always trellissed with iron.

The walled garden near the house, which conveys the idea of seclusion and repose, pleases me; the iron gate too, which serves as a sort of breathing place, and lets in a peep at the horizon, seems well imagined; but the wall-win-

dows, which are nearly down to the ground, and expose one to a cross battery of stares, appear to take, in a great degree, from the picture of repose and retirement which is suggested by the general design.

What is without his garden, the Italian wisely leaves to the farmer. He has indeed a passion for an avenue, perhaps less on account of its antiquated grace than the convenience of its sun-proof branches in so broiling a climate; but what has been facetiously called the belted *scrubbery*, is a monster not yet naturalized in Italy. He has as little idea of the melancholy monotony of the English park, and least of all, of a large extent of level lawn. If you should tell him that in this he was to contemplate 'nature drest,' he would probably reply that *he* saw in it only nature shaved, an operation which, judging even from her *dandys*, does not appear to be extremely popular in Italy.

In short the Italian, generally speaking, if he admires the English garden, contents himself with admiring it in *Pindemonte*'s descriptions, though some few are now attempting to bring it into fashion in Italy at the moment that we seem to be returning to the more rational taste of our ancestors in England.

One thing, however, is very remarkable, that

even where this has been partially introduced, there are no such things as toad-stool cottages, with double coach-houses, or any of those perverse erections, which I should characterize as *grotesque;* by which I mean a coarse and clumsy order of the picturesque.

The cause of this seems to be a thing well worthy of remark in itself. Few models are to be found of it even in the really rustic buildings of the peasantry; for the characteristic of the Italian village as well as the Italian town is picturesque elegance. The farm-house, where it is large, is surrounded by arcades; the villa is shrouded with cypresses, which harmonise happily with the building, and make a pleasing break between its formal lines, and the dishevelled foliage of the middle ground and distance. The church is such as would form the ornament of a city in England or France; and the oratory under trees, by the road-side, with its *fresco* paintings, completes the scene.

The remote origin of this elegance seems to have been the magnificence of the Italians when 'wealth was theirs,' and the impulse would appear to have continued after the cessation of the cause. Many circumstances have seconded this, and hence, perhaps, architecture has survived so many of her sister arts. One of the most ob-

vious is the plenty of materials, which are furnished by stream and mountain, and the cheapness of manual labour. Other causes too have indirectly contributed to this effect. Thus the proprietors, (at least in the plains,) being almost always rich, naturally seek to give stability to their farm-houses, and to adapt them to the purposes which they are to answer. These purposes themselves, in this climate, come in aid of architecture; for here porticos or arcades form the cheapest and pleasantest apartment, during the greater part of the year, and are moreover conducive to the purposes of husbandry; as such, for instance, afford a place of deposit for the pods of the Indian corn, where it is laid to dry, and afterwards beat out for use.

But more must, after all, be referred to the more general principle, the hereditary passion of the Italians for architecture and their local monuments. To illustrate the strength of this;—I was once in a small sub-alpine town, a steeple in which, separate from the church, as is sometimes the case in Italy, was struck and injured by lightning. In the week succeeding this accident, six thousand francs, a large sum in Italy, were subscribed from the same village towards repairing it, besides large contributions

from the peasantry in wood, stone, and gratuitous labour.*

As I have a great dislike to putting myself under the tuition of a *valet de place*, who is eternally drawing upon you for admiration, and who pounds every thing together in his mortar, good, bad, or indifferent, I usually do without one, or trust to my stars for the first chance-*cicerone* they may afford me. Accordingly, on one of my first visits to this place, I caught up a countryman, whom I invested with the character. After serving me, in this capacity, as to the points on which I interrogated him, he volunteered some information of his own, which was, at least, more original than what I should have derived from any other source. He told me that this hill, as well as others, was formerly infested by a certain monstrous animal called a *tserbero*, (cerbero,) a race of monsters not yet utterly extinct, as there was still a reward of thirty golden napoleons for whoever should kill one. I mention this, in confirmation of a remark in a former letter, for the purpose of shewing how oddly something classical mingles, (one does not

* A begging brief in England, though it should make the tour of the kingdom, would not I believe clear much beyond the expenses of collecting.

know how,) in the fancies and fables of this people.*

Another of his stories was of a different description, but I think equally characteristic. Observing upon the porticos on this hill, he told me, that there was formerly a file of them which extended all the way to Padua: that these were the work of the Jews, who, on this condition, were to have a domicil in Vicenza; but they fell, by miracle: and the Vicentines, convinced by this judgment that they were committing a flagrant sin, refused the refuge which they had granted; so from that time forward there had been no Jews in the repentant city. In proof of this, he bid me observe that there was no *ghetto*, or Jews' quarter, in Vicenza. I knew it would be hopeless to suggest another reason for the absence of this peddling people, namely, that there was no commerce to tempt them, and so acquiesced, without dispute, in the explanation.

In my walk I observed upon a wall, fronting the south, which serves to support a part of this mountain, several pear-trees trained as with us.

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* The foundation of this story I afterwards found to have been a reward advertised for the destruction of some non-descript and mischievous monster, which was perhaps a *wandering* wolf.

The fruit is termed *pera di spalliera;* it is of a melting quality and delicious, but seems to require all the fostering of art and nature united, and, even thus indulged, comes late to perfection. Figs, peaches, and nectarines are, you well know, cultivated, as apple-trees are in orchards by us, but with less care. Hence, though the latter fruits are much more plentiful, and ordinarily better in Italy than at home, I *have* very often eat them more highly flavoured in England, where gold performs the effect of sun.* But you must cross the Alps to eat figs and pears in perfection. These last (I mean always wall pears) are usually good in proportion to their size, and I have seen some which weighed about an English pound.

I cannot dismiss the subject of this and other extensive flats, which I have described in the beginning of this letter, without making some remarks on their probable origin. I believe it is a common observation that great plains are found all over the world in the neighbourhood of lofty mountains.

* In Italy garden fruits are not studied; or cultivated with any expence. The superiority therefore of a peach-tree which costs two guineas over one which cost two-pence may be conceived; since the sun, though it volunteers its visits to the latter, is *pressed* into our garden service and forcibly detained by us.

If this be so, so general an effect cannot be without something of a uniform cause. The traces of that, which perhaps acts in all similar places, are particularly evident here. It should seem that the waters descending from the mountains had brought down with them their wrecks and great quantities of alluvial matter, which filling up former inequalities in the surface, had formed these enormous levels. But enough of mountains, rivers, and the fields through which they run.

'Sat prata biberunt.'

LETTER XVI.

Data from which to form a Calculation respecting the Frequency of Intermittent Fevers in Vicenza, &c.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

An Irishman who had been long in a continental service, justified his preference of foreign society, by observing, 'he should like England very well if he was not obliged to be so much on his *p's* and his *q's* there.' I have however found out, at last, that there are p's and q's even in Italy, though of a somewhat different and of a more limited description than our own. I was the other morning at a house, where I found a considerable society assembled; a lady of which asked me about my ague, observing that she had a brother and several friends labouring under this indisposition, but, except once when she was a child, had never had such a visitation herself. I could not help observing, I thought the exception was somewhat invidious, and that a fever, on her part, would be considered by her various friends as an amiable piece of complaisance. I saw instantly, by her countenance, that I had inadvertently sprung a mine. All the women looked at each other,

and I remained, as one does, after stumbling upon some forbidden subject. I had not observed the precept,

——— *male ominatis*
Parcere verbis.

Luckily for me, anecdotes of fevers spread, and grew like ghost-stories; so that my blunder was forgot in a subject of greater interest; whilst I, in the mean time, gathered some information which was new to me, from these tales of terror.

The variety of stories which I heard in the circle I have referred to, suggested to me a whimsical project, which I immediately put into execution. This was to learn the quantity of bark consumed in Vicenza, and to ascertain from this the number of her inhabitants who had been lately afflicted with intermittents. I accordingly went to my apothecary, and demanded what quantity he had sold during the summer, and he informed me that he had disposed of two cases, containing, in the whole, 400 lbs. I mentioned this to a physician who assured me, that if this man had sold 400 lbs. another who supplied the hospital must have, at least, furnished a thousand. Now there are four considerable apothecaries here, and about a dozen inferior ones. It cannot therefore be

too much to conjecture that the four great ones have sold together two thousand pounds, and the dozen, *dii minores*, one thousand. This calculation, which, supposing the datum to be true, must be much within the mark, gives us three thousand. Allowing one thousand pounds to have been employed as a preventive or alterative medicine, (though it is not used liberally as such in Italy,) we will suppose the other to have been brought to bear directly on the fever, in what is here termed victorious doses. Now the fever, it is well known, very rarely resists two ounces, and sometimes yields to less. Two thousand pounds therefore, (allowing two ounces for an ague,) according to the measure of twelve ounces to the pound, will give twenty-four thousand fevers, a number nearly equal to the population of the city! But as many of its inhabitants have probably had this two or three times during the summer, you are not to suppose that every Vicentine has been individually afflicted with it; but simply that there have been so many intermittent fevers, however distributed.

You will perhaps consider this as little less extravagant than Elagabalus's cob-web calculation.

Having got thus far in my letter, and stalked to the window to inhale a mouthful of fresh air,

I witness a little picture, which I shall copy. See first four oxen, who have dragged into the court-yard an immense butt upon wheels, with a quantity of grapes in it, and who are now feeding on the stalk and leaves of the fresh *cinquantino*. In the butt are two, who *should* be fauns, though I cannot ascertain whether they have tails, inasmuch as they wear breeches, though these are tucked up so high, that I thought at first I could have cleared up that interesting question. The fauns are employed in trampling out the grape juice, for the use of the wine press is unknown to them, and the said grapes are crushed together with their stalks, because this saves some little time and trouble.* The master of an apartment in this palace, to whom these grapes belong, is to be seen reclining on the carriage of the butt, that he may superintend the operation of his fauns, whose feet, legs, and thighs are of the colour of red ink. In a corner of the court is a man tugging at a bucket in a well; because winches and windlasses, though

* The process of refining wine, more necessary here than elsewhere, though used in every other country of Europe is unknown in Italy, where people drink their wine, dregs, dirt, and all.

known in this town, seem to be considered as articles of luxury; and, to give the last Flemish touch to the picture, a monstrous mountaineer of a housemaid is emptying from an upper window into the court, a thing without a name.*

* Yet these people wonder at being haunted by contagious fevers.

LETTER XVII.

An Improvvisatore—his Talent common in Italy—Facilities afforded to Poetical Folly by the Italian Language.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

HAVING been advised to drink certain mineral waters as the best preservative against the return of my fever, and these waters, requiring, as my adviser well or ill informed me, some precautions at this season of the year, I had determined to confine myself to the house of an evening: but the arrival of a celebrated *improvvisatore* tempted me to break through the embargo. This man gave an *academy*, as it is termed here, in one of the halls of the famous Olympic theatre. I give you the process of this scene of conjuration.

Two understrappers appeared upon the stage, with materials for writing and a large glass vase: one of these took down, on separate scraps of paper, different subjects, which were proposed by such of the audience as chose to suggest them. The other, having duly sealed them, threw them into the above-mentioned vase, which he held up and shook before the spectators: he then presented it amongst them for

selection, and different subjects were drawn; but all rejected, till they came to *Alfieri alla tomba di Shakespeare*,* an argument which was accepted by universal acclamation.

The two assistants now retired, and the principal appeared in their place. He was young and good looking, and, being of opinion that a neckcloth took from his beauty, wore his throat bare; but in other respects had nothing singular in his dress, which was precisely that of an Englishman. He received the paper, on entering, and immediately threw himself on a chair; from whence, after having made a few Pythian contorsions, but all apparently with a view to effect, he poured out a volley of verse without the slightest pause or hesitation; but this was only a prelude to a mightier effort.

He retired and the two assistants reappeared; subjects were proposed for a tragedy, the vase shaken as before, and the papers, containing the arguments, drawn.

Amongst the first titles fished out, was that of *Ines de Castro*, which, as no objection was taken to it, was adopted, and communicated to the *improvvisatore*. He advanced and said, that, as he was unacquainted with the story,

* A visit purely supposititious.

he desired to be instructed in the leading facts. These were communicated to him, succinctly enough, by the suggester of the theme, and he forthwith proceeded to form his *dramatis personæ*, in the manner of one who thinks aloud. These were few, after the example of *Alfieri*. As soon as this matter was arranged, he began and continued to declaim his piece, without even a momentary interruption, though the time of recitation, unbroke by any repose between the acts, occupied the space of three hours.

I cannot say that the piece was good. This was in the usual '*hence-on-thy-life*'-*style* of home manufacture; but it was as good as tragedies usually are, and interspersed with some lights, indicative of genius. I was in the mean time wearied beyond all powers of sufferance, and being unluckily placed in a front row, could not with any decency, abandon my post.

Curiosity to see how far human powers can be carried, may tempt one to go and see a man stand upon his head; but to see a man stand on his head for three hours, is another thing. As a *tour de force*, the thing was marvellous; but I have seen as wonderful in this country, which is fertile in such prodigies. I recollect once seeing a man, to whom, after he had played other pranks in verse, three subjects for sonnets were proposed, one of which was

Noah issuing from the ark, the other *the death of Cæsar*, and the third, *the wedding of Pantaloon*. These were to be declaimed, as it may be termed, *interlacedly*, that is, a piece of Noah, a piece of Cæsar, and a piece of Pantaloon. He went through this sort of bread and cheese process with great facility, though only ten minutes were given him for the composition; which was, moreover, clogged with a yet more puzzling condition: he was to introduce what was termed *a verso obbligato*, that is, a particular verse, specified by one of the audience, at a particular place, in each of the sonnets. This last summerset in fetters, appeared to please the spectators infinitely, who proposed other tricks, that I do not remember, but which were all equally extraordinary.

Though the present professor had softened down his guttural and aspirated pronunciation, I soon recognized him for a Florentine, by certain singularities of expression, which distinguish his fellow citizens. These, indeed, who may be styled *omnium elegantiarum amantissimi*, are peculiarly gifted with the powers of extemporary composition, and, of a fine evening in Florence, you may see the streets swarming with the lower orders, who have transformed themselves into rhapsodists, or gallants. For there, the workman, who has finished his daily task,

instead of expending his little gains at the wine house, equips himself with a good coat and guitar, and catches immediate inspiration from what he would, I suppose, call the mantle and the lyre.

The Tuscans, and more particularly the Florentines, are distinguished for this talent; but it is common over Italy and the Italian isles. An English General, at an inspection of troops, having asked some questions of a Corsican drummer-boy, was surprized by his answering him in octave rhyme. There are dozens of tailors and tinkers, in this country, who are capable of as bold a flight.

Sonnets are poured forth upon every occasion, and walls are placarded with them. I once saw as a specimen of these, 'Anacreonticks on a lady's being cut for a cancer in her breast, and a schirrous tumour under her arm,' apparently, (as the subscriber bore the same name as the lady,) written by her husband or son. There is no subject here, which is safe from poetry. It is absolutely an epidemic. Witness the number of hospitals established for the reception of those who labour under this distemper, distinguished by more perverse and ridiculous appellations than common-place madness ever conceived; such as the *gl'infuocati, ed intruonati,*

&c. &c. &c. Hence too their various pastors *in partibus*, and the myriads of beasts who bleat or bray in the imaginary pastures of Arcadia.*

The great cause of this species of mania seems to arise from the flexible character of Italian, the variety of styles which it admits, its copiousness in rhymes and synonymes, its license and luxuriance in every branch of language.

Sweeping as is the cause, we must not however suppose, that it is unlimited in its effects; and it is but fair to state that the Arcadians, &c. are as ridiculous in the eyes of sensible Italians, as the persons immortalized in the Baviad and Mæviad are in the eyes of rational Englishmen.

Still the phrenzy continues, if it does not spread, and the 'soft Arcadians' continue 'ever blooming' and 'nightly nodding' in spite of the sarcasms of *Baretti*, and the incessant battery which is played upon them by modern wits.

I have already mentioned that the *academy*, which forms the subject of the present letter, was held in one of the halls of the Olympic theatre, which is, I dare say, known to you in

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* On being made a member of the *Arcadi*, a pastoral nickname is assigned you, and *a farm in Arcadia!*

copper-plate. The theatre itself was not appropriated to this purpose, because the illumination of it is too expensive, for a city that does not even light its lamps on moon light nights. This piece of splendour is reserved in honour of sovereigns or great princes. A saying of Buonaparte, on a similar occasion, was quoted to me, with great applause, which may serve to shew how very ignorant that illustrious person and his admirers here were on subjects of architecture. His exclamation was '*Eccoci in Atene.*' Such a blunder in a Buonaparte need not cause surprize, but I believe there is scarcely an architect in Italy, who might not have made the same; and I doubt whether there are fifty people here, strong as they are in their own antiquities, who have accurate notions of what a Greek theatre was.

LETTER XVIII.

Originality of the Florentines, &c.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

Amongst the variety of features which make up national character, there is nothing, perhaps, which is more surprizing than that originality of imagination which marks certain nations, and of which others, for some unknown reason, seem to be utterly deprived. This, which is very observable in the wide world of Europe, is equally remarkable in the branches of the Italian family.

This particularity seems indeed to be the most indelible part of national character. Thus it may be remarked that ancient Rome was peculiarly deficient in originality, and in poetry, architecture, and sculpture, was the mere imitator of Greece, diluting and enfeebling every thing which she received from that original source. It is not less singular that she should not have given birth to a single distinguished person, (this holds good as well in modern as in ancient times) even in the sort of foreign school which she established.

I pass to a people, sprung from Rome itself, yet presenting in the point we are considering, the most extraordinary contrast to the parent stock. I mean the Florentines, of whose propensity towards every thing that is elegant I spoke in the preceding letter. But they have better claims to honour, and may be characterized as peculiarly distinguished by the originality of their genius. From the first appearance of this race on the great stage of Europe down to their vulgarization under Leopold, whose system, though very happily calculated for a people, situated as they were, naturally tended to the extinction of national character, we may remark this preponderating feature. It is indeed to be traced throughout; in their poets, their sculptors and their architects. Dante chooses Virgil for a leader; but what guidance did he follow but that of his own marvellous imagination? His lights are his own, and his darkness like that of his own Purgatory is a shadow projected by himself.* Michael Angelo too recurred to the great models of antiquity in the art of sculpture; but are his works imitations of the Grecian or Roman school? and what but his own magic

* Canto III. del Purgatorio.

could have raised those ghosts, which we see sitting on their sepulchres in the *Cappella de' depositi* of Florence? what but his ardent imagination could have embodied all the awful attributes which we tremblingly admire in the Jewish Legislator? It is with architecture as with poetry and sculpture, for what but Florentine genius could have hung those domes, 'self balanced,' which seem rather to float in the air than rest upon the earth.

With regard to letters, it may be observed, that where Florence was indebted for wealth to others, she made her own whatever she received; stamping it with her own national dye, before she gave it currency amongst the nations.

In short every thing, even at present, bespeaks the former originality of character, which distinguished this people, and is not yet utterly extinct. Their language (on which I shall have occasion to remark hereafter) has a genius of its own, the structure of their houses and their bridges, and even the mode of paving their streets is original, and unlike what you see in the rest of Europe.

LETTER XIX.

Curiosity of the Vicentines—Ludicrous Stanzas of Gritti to which it gave rise—Illustration of them.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

It was well that I did not yield to my impatience, and escape from the improvvisatore; for, safe as I conceived myself in my insignificance, I found that I had given room to remark, even whilst observing the most passive conduct during his declamation—'I had neither applauded or disapproved—I had never spoken, except when spoken to, &c. &c. &c.—'

I have always been disposed to like small cities, since they afford few faces and few streets to charge one's memory with, but the spirit of curiosity which distinguishes them, may weigh against their merits and conveniences. Yet though many of the vices of towns, similarly constituted, are necessarily the same, you may often trace other features of likeness in these, which it is difficult to explain at first sight. Such is the odd relation that exists between Vicenza and Florence, which however

resemble each other, in nothing so nearly as in their extreme urbanity and love of gossip. Is the first put on to masque the second? However this may be, the curiosity of the Vicentines is notorious throughout the north of Italy, and has been put on record by *Gritti*, a Venetian, in certain stanzas which I shall send you, inasmuch as they have not hitherto appeared in print. This *poco curante* had arrived at Vicenza with his wife, for the purpose of taking the *Recoaro* waters, when observing the general hubbub excited by his appearance, he retired into a coffee-house, called for pen, ink and paper, wrote down an account in verse, of his 'birth parentage and education,' and left it for the information of the curious impertinents of the place.

Nobili cittadini e mercadanti,
Uomini, donne, popol di Vicenza,
Che interrogate cavalieri e fanti
Per aver de' miei fatti conoscenza,

Boor, burgher, baron, born of better root,
Vicentines all, (to make a general clearance,)
Who stand and stare, and question horse and foot
Of me and my affairs, in hopes to bear hence

E mi adocchiate il da dietro e'l d'avanti
Per pesarmi in sostanza e in apparenza,
Eccovi tutto ciò che mi risguarda!
E andate a letto, perchè l'ora è tarda.

Il mio nome è Francesco, *alias* Checco,
Son Gritti di famiglia e in linea torta
Scendo da quell' Andrea fù doge e becco,
Il di cui figlio s'adoperò alla Porta.*
Sono magro poco meno d'uno stecco,
La fronte ho calva e la veduta corta,
L'anno afferrami il cul' quarantunesimo,
Ed ho meco la fede del battesimo.

Some fag-end of a tale or foolish bruit—
You who would sift me, substance and appearance,
Have whatsoe'er concerns my style and state,
And get to bed, good people; for it's late!

Francisco christen'd, *Gritti* born and suckled,
I am descended, in a twisted sort,
From that fam'd Andrew, sometime doge and cuckold
Whose son so stoutly stirr'd him at the Port.
I'm lean as Pharoah's kine, in wedlock buckled,
But childless; therewithal am bald, and short
Of sight—not one and forty—if you doubt me—
I've my baptismal register about me.

* I have rejected a more epigrammatic but less delicate reading in this line.

Ho l'onor d'esser scritto in libro d'oro,*
E siedo ne' consiglj de' quaranta ; †
Dritti e delitti giudico nel foro
Con quella mano che il cerino agguanta.
La mia felicitade e il mio tesoro
Nel roseo mensual borsin si pianta.
Ho moglie, non ho figlj, ho poche rendite,
E gli acquisti pareggio colle vendite.

Mio padre è morto (lasciamolo in pace),
Mia madre è vecchia e non vo' dir di lei; ‡

Amongst the forty (know that I've the pleasure
To see my name i'the *libro d'oro* writ)
I laws and flaws, like any Daniel, measure
With that same hand, which grasps the mystic bit
Of lighted wax ; my happiness and treasure
In the pink purse of monthly circuit sit.
What I can call my own yields small supply,
And so I'm fain to sell before I buy.

My father's dead, (heaven rest his soul !) my mother's
Old, and the less that's said of her the better.

* *Il libro d'oro*, or the golden book, was the register in which the names of all the Venetian nobility were inscribed.

† Both civil and criminal causes were tried by the *consiglj de' quaranta*, whose monthly pay was brought to them in a rose-coloured purse. The *candle end* also alluded to in the text, was a perquisite of the members of this body, and was held by each during their sittings, for the purpose of reading documents.

‡ His mother was gallant beyond the sufferance of Venice.

Ho due fratelli, l'un troppo vivace
E l'altro prudente più ch' io non vorrei.
Questi un eroe serba alla patria e tace
E un par d'ovaja per li semidei;
E quegli ha due figlie da marito,
Che a tentone lo cercano col dito.

L'acque di Recoaro, da cui spero
Qualche sollievo ai mali di mia moglie,
Mi terranno in Vicenza un mese intiero;
E non vorreimi inarridir le
Siam trè compreso il servo—il locandiere
Per cinque lire al dì seco ci accoglie—
E di quel poi, che spenderò in cucina
Ne avrete il conto esatto ogni mattina.

As for the rest, I have a pair of brothers;
For a soldier and two girls our state's a debtor
To one, and he's as sober as the other's
As much too crank—I've touch'd them to the letter.—
Add, *Crazy* has two marriageable daughters
Who angle for a husband in all waters.

Your Spa, in which I hope, my wife who's lost
Her health, may swallow nerve and spirits stronger,
For a full month will nail me to my post:
I should be sorry to be bother'd longer.
With the servant we are three—Our lodgings cost
Five livres by the day—Beef, capon, conger,
Fish, flesh, or fowl the fare, I'll daily hitch in
To a bulletin due notice of my kitchen.

Sono di più filosofo e poeta,
E credo tutto ciò ch' è naturale;
La pace ed il piacer son la mia meta,
Odio i pedanti ed il cerimoniale.

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* * * * * (*)

I have given you these stanzas, as confirmatory of the opinion entertained on Vicentine curiosity, and as speaking the character of the gay and witty *poco curante* of later times. I am tempted to illustrate them with the assistance of an ancient life of the *Andrea Gritti*, celebrated in the second stanza, not only for the purpose of completing my task in a workmanlike manner, and

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Moreover witness in my person met
Philosopher and poet in due measure:
I credit what I can, hate etiquette
And pedantry, and point at peace and pleasure.

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(*) The latter half of the last stanza contains a detail of personal particulars, of little interest, and such as are not usually submitted to public inspection.

adding the contrast of another picture; but because the memoirs I refer to, as well others, give some notion of that marvellous *esprit de corps* which once animated the nobility of Venice, and which enabled her to lift up her head amidst the nations, more than the concurrence of all other circumstances which appear primary, but in fact are but secondary means of national greatness.

Though the poet only talks of the son of his renowned ancestor having distinguished himself at the Port, he might have extended this eulogium to the father. This man, *Andrea Gritti*, a Venetian patrician, born in 1455, after having followed a relation in embassies to France, Spain and England, where he seems to have informed himself with the utmost exactness, of all circumstances relative to those countries, established himself as a merchant at Constantinople; a fact in itself worthy of attention, since it proves that the exclusion of the Venetian nobility from commerce is not of so early a date as some writers upon this subject have supposed. The effects too, with which this measure was attended, are yet more interesting, inasmuch as they tend to call in question the policy of that measure, even in its first and most immediate effects. For if the sordidness of trade was supposed to dim the

splendour of rank, and attention to private affairs to divert attention from objects of public duty, this theory did not at least hold good in the case before us.

Gritti, whilst he was enriching himself 'beyond the dreams of avarice,' had always in view the interests of his country, mixed very naturally, (as it should appear,) with individual views of political greatness, which his name and connexions made reasonable pretensions of ambition. To these high objects all considerations of immediate interest were subservient; and in this pursuit he spared neither pains nor money, nor shrunk from dangers which crossed him in his purpose.

With this view, he built up a marvellous influence at Constantinople, which will appear incredible to those, whose notions of ancient Turkey are founded on their knowledge and experience of what it is at present. But it would be easy to show, that, though the enmity between Turk and Christian was then stronger than now, the bonds of amicable intercourse were in the same proportion drawn closer; and this seems to be the natural result of such a state of things; for as men are brought together, no matter how, their feelings, whether good or bad, are naturally kindled by the contact.

But not to wander in search of an explanation where the thing itself may seem uncertain, I should say that all familiar history, and indeed the simple circumstance of Franks being formerly allowed to reside in Constantinople, from which they are now excluded, affords a confirmation of the fact.*

Other circumstances, which have still their influence, no doubt contributed to the success of *Gritti*. To the most thorough knowledge of the laws and manners of the Turkish people, to excessive generosity, their favourite virtue, he added advantages which it is more difficult for a European to estimate, I mean those of an exterior and manner, which entirely accorded with their sympathies and prejudices. . .

Backed by such various recommendations *Gritti* made a friend of *Achmet*, Grand Vizir and son-in-law of *Bajazet*, whose support he secured by princely presents, and through him, (besides probably being favoured in points of traffic,) obtained the farm of several taxes.

* In earlier times, intermarriages were not uncommon between Turks and Christians, and we have the example of the daughter of a Greek Emperor betrothed to a Sultan. A remarkable feature in this treaty is a stipulation for her having the means of pursuing the rites of her own religion in the seraglio of the grand Signior. The fact, if I recollect rightly, is noticed by Gibbon.

Whilst he mixed thus intimately in Turkish affairs, he had an opportunity of benefiting his country, through the lights he had obtained, and gave intelligence to her Ambassador at the Port, which, had it been listened to, would have saved Venice from the surprize of hostilities in the midst of an apparent calm.

When the storm burst, all Venetians at the Port, except *Gritti*, were imprisoned, and their effects confiscated. He alone was left untouched, both in person and property, but was warned of the punishment which would follow, if he should abuse this indulgence by giving political intelligence to his countrymen. He however did so; was detected, and condemned to the stake. His influence with the Grand Vizir again saved him. This minister persuaded the Sultan to imprison him for the present and deal with him afterwards according to the event of the war, alledging that should this go ill, they might find a useful mediator in his person.

Gritti was accordingly imprisoned, as it should seem, in the castle of the seven towers, and languished in confinement during many months. He was at last unexpectedly delivered. The life from which I quote, after stating that the Turkish arsenal took fire, observes, *it was reported* that *Bajazet* was visited by an unknown being in a

dream, upon the succeeding night, who conducted another by the hand, and warned the Sultan that the mischief which had befallen him, would be only the earnest of further evil, should he continue to persecute the person who accompanied him. *Bajazet*, pursues my authority, on waking, ordered all the prisoners to be brought before him, and recognizing *Gritti*, as the man he had seen in vision, ordered him to be set at liberty.

The strange cause assigned for his deliverance affords no ground for doubting the fact. He appears, very soon after being set at liberty, to have acquired great influence with the Sultan himself; he was dispatched to Venice with intimation of this Prince being disposed to treat with the Senate, and peace was, in fact, concluded through his means.

On his return home, he was created one of the two *Provveditori* of the Venetian troops in the war occasioned by the league of Cambray. The term in its strict and original sense means *Purveyor:* and it is probable that such was once the accurate definition of this officer, and that the peculiar constitution of the Venetian armies led to an extension of his powers. However this may be, we observe in history, these *provveditori* exercising great and extensive powers in the Ve

netian armies, and often directing the general, who, as a foreigner, was of course more likely to bend under their controul. They seem in short to have been much what *De Wit* was on board the Dutch fleet, or (to come to our own times) what the representative commissioners were in the armies of Republican France.—To my story;

The superiority of *Gritti's* mind and a natural military genius seem to have given him an ascendance greater than ordinary. He soon distinguished himself, both as a leader and as a soldier, in the war which followed the league of Cambray, and is, I believe, ranked with the best generals of that day. It is certain at least that his own countrymen had so high a notion of his military merits, that, but for his deprecating the measure, they would have passed over their custom of choosing their Commander-in-chief from amongst foreigners, and bestowed upon him the charge of *Condottier d'armi.*

It may be surmised that prudence mingled with patriotism in the refusal, and that he might expect his authority to be more circumscribed as a general than as a commissioner: as such, he, at any rate, continued to serve, and in the exercise of his military duties was at last made prisoner by the French. It is not the least ex-

traordinary part of his history, that, whilst in custody, and never suffered even to attend mass, without being accompanied by a guard of fifty men, he found means to carry on a correspondence, in church, with a banished Venetian; and, in consequence, conveyed the most important intelligence to his senate. He was, this time, more fortunate in his secret diplomatic transactions than the first. He escaped detection, and having, by his conduct and manners, made a favourable impression on the king of France, was also set at liberty by this sovereign, and afterwards employed by him in framing a treaty with the republic. So that this singular man had the unprecedented honour (for such I imagine it to be) of twice negotiating a peace, as civilians would term it, *in vinculis*.

Andrea Gritti, was not long after this memorable fact, made Doge; though on what authority his descendant terms him 'doge *e becco*' I am at a loss to discover, unless the second character is to be considered as incidental to the first.

The son, 'che si adoperò alla Porta,' was *Luigi*, one of four whom he had by a Greek mistress during his residence at Constantinople. He inherited his father's tact and talents but neither his prudence nor his fortune; for having

raised himself to a higher pitch of greatness than had been reached by *Andrew* in that court, he tumbled headlong from this height, and perished miserably.

The comic effusion, I have given, appears to have been omitted in *Gritti's* poems, merely from the fear of giving offence to the Vicentines. I am willing to hope they would have too good temper and taste not to laugh with the satyrist.

The fate of the poet, who outlived his country, may not be uninteresting to you. Obliged, or fancying himself obliged, to bear a part in the farce of the democratic municipality, which was substituted for the patrician government, like *Laberius*, he revenged his degradation by a jest. Amongst the rabble, who composed the *dramatis personæ*, was a boatman of the name of *Piero*. *Gritti* always declared himself of this man's opinion, observing he 'should stick by Peter.' If it was observed that Peter had not yet spoke, *Gritti*, said, 'it did not matter, and that he should be of his opinion, when he *did*.' Luckily such jokes were less dangerous in Italy than in France, and the wit was suffered to jest and die in peace.

Lest however this anecdote should give you a false idea of the character which the revolution took in this country, I ought to mention it was

for a very short time that the ignorant or worthless were uppermost; and the deputations, sent by the different provinces of Italy, to the famous congress of Lyons, containing names, all distinguished by family, wealth, worth, and talents, sufficiently vouch the fact.

LETTER XX.

Austrian Decrees, prohibitory of the Importation of foreign Manufactures—Mistaken Policy of the Government, &c. &c.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

THE cold (which I should consider as severer here than it usually is in London in the month of November) admonished me to go in search of

——— what Nature, tailor to the bear,
To man himself denied;

and, (seeing, or rather feeling the severity of the weather) to come as nearly as possible to that judicious quadruped in the article of apparel. Recollecting therefore to have surprized many Italians in their dens,* in a strange sort of hairy

* In general, the good coat or gown is wisely put away, and the Italian does not dress *in his best clothes* till he is ready to sally, though exceptions may perhaps be found to this, in a Cardinal, an Archbishop, or a Minister.

I *once*, indeed, saw at a certain Countess's who held a numerous *conversatione* at a watering-place, one of the first men in Italy for wealth and family, in a silk neckcloth and jacket without skirts.

jacket, I (as it is not usual here to devolve such cares upon your tailor) set out in search of a woollen-draper who might supply me with something of the kind. I was directed to a very civil person, who unfolded his stores with the polite patience of a London shop-keeper, and answered all my queries with the same good natured readiness I should find, on a similar occasion, at home. He soon found me the sort of *foul weather clothing* I came in quest of, and informed me that it was *robba Inglese* and called *Calmùc*. I at first thought him

> ——— 'liberal di forestieri nomi
> A merci, che non mai varcàro i monti;'*

but he, in answer to my assurances that I had never seen any English biped so clothed, maintained that it was nevertheless of the manufacture of my country and came from *Leda* (Leeds).

Though the price of this and his other English stuffs was necessarily high, (for all he had were sent through Hamburgh, which he, to my surprize, assured me was the cheapest channel,) I found him in infinite grief at this mine being closed by a decree of the Austrian government,

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* 'Liberal of foreign names, bestow'd at will,
On what had never cross'd St. Gothard's hill.'

which is prohibitory of the introduction of every species of *foreign* manufactures, muslin, cotton, woollen or silk.

This decree will of course be well known in England, and receive better comments than I can bestow. For myself, holding that every government has a right to exclude foreign manufactures, for the purpose of encouraging national industry, I can find nothing damnable or heretical in the principle: but whether this is wise in its application,* or just in its details, is a question which admits serious doubts.

To contract the first question into as narrow a compass as possible: I should observe that many English productions are become articles of necessity, and we all acknowledge necessity to be above law. Hence the first decree of the nature I have described, was followed by the re-establishment of insurance companies, first known

* The effect of these decrees is what I anticipated. The Lombard towns are full of foreign manufactures, which, from the inadequate increase of price, cannot have paid the duties.

In the mean time, the receipts in the custom-house of Milan suddenly fell off 200,000 franks, or £8000. A person in Venice, who had good means of information, told me that 1,000 pieces of Nankin (at least 5,000 yards) were daily smuggled out of the *Porto franco*, and of course scattered through the shops of this and the surrounding cities.

in the time of the French, for the purpose of underwriting contraband articles, not against the dangers of the enemy, or the sea, but against the custom houses of the sovereign in whose dominions they were erected.

The extreme difficulty of enforcing these decrees naturally leads to the consideration of what ought to be the policy of all countries under the moral and political circumstances of modern Italy. It is unfortunately the nature of man to catch at every thing which offers the prospect of immediate advantage without consideration of future consequences; and hence almost all states have attempted to force manufactures, without reference to the natural order of things. Yet before these comes agriculture, and internal commerce, which may be considered as her hand-maid.

But while she is not ripe for more, there is no country in Europe which presents such facilities in this respect as Lombardy. A careful observer will remark that almost all the rivers here have, at some time or other, changed their course, from the immense volume of their water, and the small difference of level in the plains through which they run; hence, man (and such an experiment has been verified) might wind them at his will: and wealth, the wages of industry, be made to circulate through every recess of northern

Italy. Yet what is the fact? That inland water carriage is dearer and more uncertain here than in any other country where it exists, and that the government by the senseless measure of provincial custom houses has taken the most effectual steps to annihilate it.

The consequences are obvious; there is little rational division of agriculture, and wheat is often cultivated upon mountains, and the vine upon plains; because each spot must be sufficient to itself, instead of different districts profiting, each by their local advantages, and then sharing them in an advantageous interchange of commodities.

Let us now look to the justice of the decree, which has led to these reflections: this is professedly to act as an *ex post facto* law; a piece of iniquity of which I am perhaps more sensible, from coming myself within its scope. With the prospect of wintering in some of these provinces, I provided myself with certain articles essential to that purpose; and knowing the torment I should undergo at the different inland custom houses (to say nothing of the inconvenience of an increase of baggage) embarked my lumber on board a vessel bound for Venice. These stores which I dispatched, in the trust of paying the accustomed duties, and long before the pro-

mulgation of this decree, I must now either abandon to the custom house, at the price they will please to pay me, or redeem, by paying an *ad valorem* duty of 60 per cent.* This will probably seem very monstrous to you: but it is in perfect uniformity with the conduct of the Austrian government on all similar occasions. On the 14*th of July*, in this year, appeared in the Venetian Gazette, a decree prohibiting the importation of articles of cutlery under the severest penalties. This decree, as I have already stated, was published on the 14*th of July;* but was antedated the 19*th of May*, and all its provisions, such as penalties, *&c.* were to commence from that period.

The second thing, which I think somewhat notable, is, that amongst many prohibited *foreign* articles are excluded various of Hungarian manufacture.

This act is so far worthy of a military government, that, if enforced, it must put every body whom it reaches in armour; for the cloths of this country may truly be designated as such. Yet

* I fortunately escaped the vexation: as my baggage had, unknown to me, arrived at Venice previous to the period fixed by the decree; if it had arrived three days later, it would have been forfeited.

here, as in most other things, the Vicentine province shews superior activity and ingenuity: and whilst the Paduan is rich only in natural productions, makes considerable efforts to furnish herself with the other necessaries of life. The principal clothing towns in this district are those of *Tiene*; *Arzignano* and *Valdagno*: These are however far from being arrived at that degree of perfection which would render them independant of the stimulus of emulation or of the example afforded by foreign models.

In a literary society, to which I went once out of curiosity, I heard bruited decrees of more fearful tendency than that to which I have alluded: but trusting that this is only distant thunder, I shall say nothing about it till it bursts.

LETTER XXI.

A literary Vicentine Society—Books kept out of sight and reach in Italy—Private and public Libraries—Public Library at Ferrara—MSS. of Ariosto preserved there, &c. &c. &c.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

I CANNOT help returning to some particulars respecting the literary society, to which I alluded in the preceding letter. Curiosity had overcome my laziness, and the apprehensions with which I am often visited on such occasions, and I ventured into the circle, which was held in a bookseller's shop. I soon however found that any thing but letters formed the subject of conversation; and, being a stranger, as well to the persons of the greater part of the assembly as to the topics agitated by them, I took up a French book, lying near me on the counter, and was soon snatched over the hills and far away. Still, before I got engaged with my subject and felt the full force of the spell, I thought I perceived some of the assistants looking at me, as if they considered me as meddling

with unlawful tools, and was afterwards confirmed in my conjecture.

It may appear somewhat odd to an Englishman that he should receive evil looks, for taking up a book in a bookseller's shop; but in Italy, always excepting the learned few, gossip, and not books, is the refuge of the unemployed, and those who seek to escape from painful reflection. As an example of this, you scarcely ever see a book lying on the table or chimney piece of an unlearned or untravelled Italian, and I never but once recollect being received in a library.

Books are usually stowed away in a garret, in the access to which you exhaust all the breath in your body. The idea of using them as the furniture of a room, and making them serve to break the formality of a party, never enters into the head of an Italian. The real bent of this people, at present, is for society, and there is no society which they do not prefer to solitude.

But, though the Italian library is a thing kept out of sight, you are not to imagine that Italy is without private collections of books, though these bear no proportion to those of England.

There are, moreover, admirable public libraries; even second rate cities (such as Verona) being often furnished with most respectable collections. Most however, as that of the Vatican,

are ill administered and illiberally conducted. The unedited MSS. contained in these are not in general of a nature very inviting: since most of them treat of civil law or theology, or turn on subjects of more curiosity than interest. There are few libraries, which, as far as I am informed, contain curious MSS. in the Italian Belles Lettres, though a most interesting monument of this description exists in the library of Ferrara. You will guess at once that I allude to the MSS. of the *Orlando Furioso*.

There is something flattering to the imagination in supposing that *genius* is creative at a touch; and he that goes into a statuary's shop is disappointed at seeing a man working from a model, covered with tacks, which serve as landmarks, when he had fancied he should have seen the sculptor dealing his blows like Pygmalion in a *ballet*, and the statue starting into life beneath the stroke. Something like this is the effect produced by a visit to the library of Ferrara. If there is a poet who would appear to have written under immediate inspiration, it is Ariosto; yet, in fact, few men have bestowed more of the file upon their compositions, and it may be added, few men have used it with more effect. This is worth remarking; for if on the one hand, it is a mistake to suppose that those thoughts only

tell, which the poet catches flying, it is an error to imagine that he always corrects his crude ideas when passing them in review. It may be remarked indeed that he often alters them for the worse, perhaps from having lost sight of the association which influenced him in their first selection. But these observations do not certainly apply to Ariosto, who appears to have been as full of his subject when he corrected as when he wrote, and never to have altered, but for the better, though he continued his corrections as long as he lived.

I have said that few poets appear to have written more under the influence of immediate inspiration than Ariosto: it may be added that no Italian poet ever obtained a wider command of the language, for whilst we find him dealing in its most familiar phraseology, we shall observe him grafting on it a thousand Latinisms, and Lombardisms not yet naturalized, which he has, some how or other, assimilated with the parent stock.

Yet, he who reviews these MSS. may convince himself that Ariosto, when he began his *Orlando* (in which few things are more striking than the skill with which he wields the language,) was as yet unpractised in its delicacies and proprieties. It is not indeed necessary to recur to these

papers for a proof; since the first line of a folio edition of the work (I believe the first) exhibits a striking example of this. Instead of the opening line, as it stands at present, it has the following:

'*I* donne e Cavalier l'armi, gli amori.'

Now, though such a construction may possibly be justifiable on the principles of philosophical grammar, it is not necessary to observe to you, that it is at least foreign to the genius of the Italian. What renders the thing more extraordinary, is, that this line was clearly suggested by one in Dante; according to an after and more accurate recollection of which he appears to have refashioned it. The verse to which I allude, to be found in the 14th Canto of the *Purgatorio*, is,

'Le donne e i Cavalier gli affanni e gli agi.'

Finding myself transported in the spirit to Ferrara, I should have probably got upon the subject of the other reliques contained in this interesting city; but I recollect that they have been already consecrated.*

I feel myself, however, irresistibly carried away into another digression, though in this I

* See Lord Byron's *Lament of Tasso*, with the Notes.

shall not quite lose sight of the right road. What a cruel thing it is that we have not a good modern translation of the *Orlando Furioso* in English, and how can we explain the fact of people reading Hoole, unless indeed they read the Orlando, as they do Jack the Giant-killer, solely for the sake of the story?

You will perhaps be inclined to laugh at the warmth with which I express myself: but I feel that the not having good modern translations of Ariosto and Tasso, is a disgrace to our literature, and conceive that we are only debarred from this by Mr. Hoole's lumbering vehicle having so long stopped the way. How delightfully might Harrington and Fairfax be recast in the form of a *rifacciamento*, and what a prelude to the *Furioso* of Harrington would be a good translation of Berni's *Innamorato*, which, independently of being necessary to the understanding the story of the *Furioso*, is only second in point of merit to that delightful romance.

LETTER XXII.

Genius of the Vicentines for Manufactures.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

I MENTIONED in a former letter, the turn of the Vicentines for manufactures. This, in addition to the many proofs which I have cited of their general superiority, is more than I can attempt to explain; as I have indeed already declared: though their preeminence might certainly in some cases be traced up to causes which speak for themselves.

Thus I consider the general superiority of the inhabitants of the Venetian state over those of Lombardy, at least, in a degree, to arise from the superior wisdom of the old Venetian government, a sort of influence which reaches infinitely farther than one is at first inclined to suppose.

Local circumstances too have their influence in matters of agriculture; inasmuch as a variety of hill, valley, and plain, are generally (and more especially in a country where internal commerce is checked) adapted to the production or superior cultivation of a world of articles

which could not otherwise be united within a similar compass of territory; but after all, more must be referred to the bent of national character; and I can as little tell why the Vicentines excel the other inhabitants of the Venetian state, in shrewdness and genius for manufactures, as I can why the inhabitants of Yorkshire are distinguished for the same qualities amongst ourselves.

As an additional proof, however, of the fact, I shall adduce a visit which I made this morning in company with an ingenious person here to a silversmith, whom I had heard praised for the precision and delicacy of his productions. This man had actually been under the necessity of manufacturing some of the tools with which he worked, and, with the aid of these, deserved the reputation he had acquired. While he shews what ingenuity is capable of, his case proves also the difficulties it has here to struggle with. In London a person of a similar description would be proud of exhibiting his handy-work. At Vicenza it is made a mystery of, and this artist does not shew his riches and masterpieces, but to such as are brought by somebody in whom he confides. What he fears from the display I know not; it is sufficient to shew that the apprehension exists.

LETTER XXIII.

Various Vicentine Recollections—Mistaken English Notions respecting Points of moral Character in the Italians.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

As you, I believe, were never at a private school, you are perhaps not aware that there was always at the end of a week a task called *gatherings*, a name which explains itself, as also a sort of stew, in which you eat up the arrears of the six preceding days, entitled a *Saturday's hash*. The present letter, in which I shall throw together whatever omissions I am sensible of, in the account I have attempted to give of this city, and which I shall try to season with what else is not foreign to the mess, may be considered in much the same light as gatherings, or a Saturday's hash.

To begin, as due, with the aristocracy: More than one half of that part of the inhabitants, coming within the description of what we should call gentlemen in England, are Counts; and this designation is so common, that the address of the beggar who way-lays you in the

street, is almost always "*Sior Conte benedeto.*" The appellation of Countess is yet more liberally applied to women of a genteel appearance, and stands in place of madam, as *sposa* does amongst the lower orders of some parts of Piedmont, and *padrona* amongst those of Mantua. But there are undoubtedly old and opulent families here; many of whose titles have been put upon record by Palladio.

To descend in the scale of classes: I find in an old book of English travels, of which I have just picked up some odd volumes in a bookseller's shop here, that the lower Vicentines were, a century ago, notorious for engaging themselves as assassins; and what seems to confirm this, is a proverb not yet out of date; of

I Vicentini
Ladri e assassini.

If this reproach was, however, once true, the steel of the French guillotine has cut out the peccant part, and one may indeed say, that assassination, except in cases of highway robbery, is now unknown in Italy. Yet observe what nicety is required in the government of mankind. When the French came into Italy, they, by an equal and rigorous administration of justice, put a stop to this enormity. Leopold

had before accomplished the same object in Tuscany by gentler means, that is by the same impartial execution of milder laws, the most severe of which only condemned a delinquent to the gallies. But he wisely left his subjects some vent for their bad blood, and threw no obstacles in the way of boxing.* The French,

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* Boxing is, I believe, under different forms, common all over Tuscany, but is reduced to least perfection in the capital. There, to recur to poetry for assistance,

"Dalle lor man cazzotto non discende
Che l'inimico non colpisca appieno;
Gli occhi, la bocca, o le narici offende;
Ma non per questo il rio furor vien meno;
Serransi corpo a corpo, e con la destra
Si stringono il canal della minestra."

Battachi.

Their hands fair knocks or foul in fury rain,
And in this tempest of bye-blows and bruises,
Not a stray fisty-cuff descends in vain;
But blood from eyes and mouth and nostrils oozes.
Nor stop they there, but in their phrenzy pull at
Whatever comes to hand, hair, nose, or gullet.

If a man finds himself overmatched at this foul play he usually shouts "*In soccorso!*" and by the aid of the first comer turns the tables upon his antagonist. *He* again finds his abettors, and the combat thickens, till the street wears the appearance of the stage at the conclusion of *Tom Thumb*.

At Sienna, the art puts on a more scientific form. In this city are regular academies for pugilistic exercise, there is

who aimed at more, put a price on cuffs, and subjected the inflictor of them to a small fine for every blow which he should plant. The consequence of this was that the French system, which put down the use of the knife in other provinces, actually for a short time revived it in Florence; and a battle is remembered which took place between certain *vetturini* in the *piazza del duomo*, where two or three perished by it, almost immediately after the prohibition of dry blows.

The French system, however, of equal and rigorous justice, (whatever were its partial or immediate effects) sooner or later, every where extinguished assassination; a propensity to which silly people at home believe to be inherent in the Italian character. Undoubtedly a

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a code for the regulation of boxing-matches, a certain time for resurrection is accorded to the one knocked down, and, in short, the strife assumes all the distinguishing features of a *courteous combat*.

In this place also, and at Florence, people contend with what may be called *courteous weapons*, that is with the unarmed fist; but at Pisa and Leghorn, they clench a cylindrical piece of stick, which projects at each end of the doubled fist, and inflicts a cruel wound when they strike obliquely. I am nearly certain that I have seen the representation of some antique statue, with the clenched hand armed in the same manner, and the stick secured to the fist by strings; but I have no recollection where.

people of quick passions is more likely to recur to the poniard than a more phlegmatic one; but every nation in Europe, at some period of its history, when police slept, has been open to the reproach. A single sentence of Lord Bacon explains the cause: *Revenge is a kind of wild justice.* And the history of manners in this country is the best illustration of the text.

But if I cannot allow that assassination, considered simply by itself, is decisive of national character, the circumstances, with which it is attended, frequently are. Thus a Roman conceived it base to shoot his enemy, because it might be done without danger; but to stab him, though by surprise, at close quarters, had, in his eyes, nothing in it that was dishonourable.

Having said that the circumstances with which assassination is attended are often illustrative of manners, I must cite an anecdote relating to the same people, which will convey an infinitely worse idea of their character. An English gentleman, long resident at Rome, was witness to the following scene: two men issued from a billiard-table into the square called the *Piazza di Spagna*, where one stabbed the other to the heart. The news of the murder soon spread; and two women, one old and the other young, rushed towards the spot, with loud

screams, and fainted on the body. Whilst these poor wretches lay senseless, their gold ear-rings were torn from their ears by the surrounding multitude!

I pass to other parts of the miscellany which I promised you. We are apt, in England, to entertain very exaggerated notions of the sobriety of the Italian people; but I do not think this is the characteristic of the northern provinces. The Vicentines indeed are too clever and lively a race to gormandize like the gross inhabitants of the Milanese:* but I do not think they can pretend to the praise of sobriety. Having often observed, with surprise, the class of small shopkeepers, &c. cheap meat fig-peckers and other little birds, which are

* With respect to Milan, I should say, that ten given people, selected from its best society, would eat twice as much and twice as often as the same number of persons of the same description in London; and the same of all other casts. Perhaps, somewhat less foreign or strong wine is drunk; but this comparative sobriety extends no farther. Talking one day on this subject with an Italian friend in London, he very truly remarked, that you may often see people drunk, or at least, deranged with wine, in the pit of the Italian opera at Milan, a thing which, one may say, is rarely to be observed in the pit of Drury Lane, or Covent Garden. But Milan is the Boeotia of Italy.

most expensive article of food, I mentioned the fact to a medical friend here, who assured me, that, previous to the general and pressing distress felt here as over the rest of Italy, he believed there was scarcely a tradesman in Vicenza who did not sup on this small game every holiday, that is *festa;* an expression which comprehends Sundays as well as Saints' days. He said thirty small birds were considered as no very extraordinary swallow; but added, (what I thought worthy of note) that though he had been frequently sent for by all ranks on account of various sources of surfeit, he had never yet had to prescribe for a similar cause of indigestion.

What this person told me, respecting the luxury of the tradesmen here, tallies entirely with my own observations on this subject; and I should say that, generally speaking, this class in Italy sat down almost always to two dishes, boiled and roast, and sometimes to three or four, besides the soup, which is an universal prologue to a foreign dinner. You will perhaps say, but in what quantity are these dishes? I answer, there is a sufficiency of each; though not what corresponds with our notions of plenty; which, after all, looks paltry in the eyes of an American.

The English are apt to imagine, because they are seldom invited to dinner by the Italians,

that they never dine themselves, feeding on rice and maccaroni. But this arises from other causes. Dr. Johnson says somewhere; "Sir, the dinner was a good dinner, but it was not a dinner to ask a man to." Upon this principle, the Italian seldom bids his acquaintance to any thing but a feast; unless they should be persons to whom a dinner may be considered as a God-send, or friends of the most familiar description. In the next place, he does not think food the necessary cement of society. *We* try to correct our repulsive habits by dinners, by drinking wine together, and by the formation of clubs. The Italians do not want to be linked together by such various devices; but are naturally and gratuitously gregarious.

Yet though our notions of Italian sobriety are, generally speaking, exaggerated, the charge is just, as far as respects the peasant. The Florentines may also collectively be considered a very temperate people, as well as the inhabitants of the more southern provinces of the peninsula.

To glean other facts more peculiar to the place from which I date, I ought to mention that I could not choose but wonder, on my first arrival, at the immense number of persons, many of them young, who [illegible] with spectacles. I learned afterwards that short-sighted-

ness was at first affected, as a means of escaping the conscription, and afterwards continued often as a fashion, and oftener as a matter of necessity: for our senses are, in some measure, what we make them; and the eye, having accustomed itself to a forced *focus*, cannot afterwards do without artificial help.

I made mention, in a former letter, of the quantity of vegetables exposed here in the *piazza*, a small oblong square, in which the market is held. In this season it is also rich in poultry and game, hares, woodcocks, partridges, and all sorts of small birds, together with guinea fowls, capons, and turkeys, to be sold whole, halved, or quartered. Add to these, all manner of imaginable manufactured articles, such as gaiters, shoes of wood and leather, crockery-ware, millinery, and ten thousand anomalous things, which my memory does not enable me to describe.

A piece, which I saw exhibited on this theatre, is perhaps deserving of mention: a poor wretch was seated in a chair, on an elevated stage, with fetters on his ancles, to prevent an escape, and a placard pendent from his neck, which described his punishment and crime; an offence which consisted, as the paper spoke, "in attempted rapine." This species of pillory, *la*

berlina, seemed to answer what was the ancient object of such a punishment with us, namely to make the criminal notorious, not to put the weapons of vindictive justice into the hands of a mob. But the Vicentine rabble, unlike the

> "——————— crowd which throws
> Its filth in some less villain's nose,

surrounded the stage, with faces expressive of painful emotion; and the disgust, evidently excited though not audibly expressed, at some coarse jests passed between the criminal and one of the by-standers, and which only moved the merriment of the *sbirri,* proved the generality of this feeling.

LETTER XXIV.

Account of the SETTE COMMUNI.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

I THOUGHT I had exhausted this city and its neighbourhood, and that I might pass the short remainder of the time I had destined to it, in all the luxury of idleness; but I am admonished by the incessant bells of the cows which are descending from the mountains, in order to winter in the plains, that I have omitted to make mention of a migratory race, the masters of these herds, who inhabit a part of the Vicentine; and who have claims upon the attention of the traveller.

I allude to the *Sette Communi;* the inhabitants of which have, I believe, excited some curiosity at home. The district occupied by these people, contains eighty-six square Italian miles. This area is almost entirely mountainous, and the spot where stands the capital, *Asiago,* is eight hundred toises above the level of the sea. The whole space, which, in addition to the seven burghs, contains twenty-four villages, is bounded by rivers, alps, and hills. Its

most precise limits are the *Brenta*, t[illegible] and the *Astico* to the west; which r[illegible] called by the Romans, the greater [illegible] *Medoacus*,*

" Terrarum septem tractus jacet inter u[illegible]
Medoacum: hic major dicitur, ille mi[illegible]

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* *Medoacus minor* was the classical name o[illegible] *Bacchiglione*, but the *Astico* also bore the sam[illegible] indeed have been considered as the same stream, [illegible] *chiglione* is but a prolongation of this and other t[illegible]

Much confusion has arisen with respect to nam[illegible] I am myself inclined to think they were often kno[illegible] than one, in ancient times. This probably is to b[illegible] as the

" Ον Ξανθον καλεουσι θεοι, ανδρες δε Σκαμανδρον.

One was a name given by the aboriginal inhabitants, [illegible] by the later settlers. As a proof of this, traces are t[illegible] of the *Medoacus Major* having borne the name o[illegible] *Brintesia*, in the time of the empire. In corroborati[illegible] the Count *Filiasi*, in his work on the ancient Veneti[illegible] that certain places in the *Lido*, near the port of [illegible] (anciently *Medoacus*), were, in old documents, styled *Brintulis* and *Brintalesia*, (the name of Malamoco itself being evidently a corruption of the ablative of *Medoacus*.) And, as the barbarians never entered the lagoon, the change of names cannot be attributed to them.

The reason that the least known of the names of rivers has survived, would seem to be, that the more classical was naturally

To the north, it has for boundary the Tyrolian Alps, looking towards *Valsagna*, and to the south, the hills of the line of *Marostica* as far as *Caltrano*. These are volcanic, but the tract of the Seven Commons is, itself, calcareous. The population of this, previous to the last dreadful year of pestilence and famine, consisted of thirty thousand souls, but is now diminished to twenty-five thousand.

The moral character of this people, who till lately enjoyed a comparatively free government, is, like that of most free men, and more especially of free mountaineers, simple, frank and good. For the rest, their customs savour of a race long insulated from their neighbours.

Some of these (but such are principally confined to the less civilized villages) remind one

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lost with the classical language, whilst the vulgar and local denomination was preserved by tradition.

I have seen many etymologies assigned for the *Brenta*, in Italian books, but none which seem probable: will the following stand? In Bullet's *Mémoire sur la Langue Celtique*, I find that *Bre* signifies a reach, and *Ente* a river: hence, perhaps, Brentford near London, and hence, perhaps, the name of the Southampton water, called, anciently, above the estuary, the *Ant* or *Ent*.

of some of the Celtic usages. Thus they watch their dead the night before interment, performing certain games about the bier. If a traveller dies by the way, they plant a cross upon the spot, and all who pass by cast a stone upon his cairn. Some go on certain seasons in the year to the high places and woods, where it is supposed they worshipped their divinities; but the origin of the custom is forgot amongst themselves, they alleging no better reason for the practice than that their fathers did so before them. If a man dies by violence, instead of clothing him, as the dead are usually clothed, they lay him out, with a hat upon his head and shoes upon his feet, seeking to give him the appearance of a way-faring man; perhaps symbolizing one surprized in the great journey of life. If a woman dies in child-birth, they lay her out, set off with all her bridal ornaments. Such are some of the most remarkable of their customs and observances.

This people, in the simplicity of their modes of life, are sufficient to themselves, cultivating all the productions of agriculture, except the vine, which their mountains are too cold to produce, and manufacturing all necessary articles; in some of which they even drive an export

trade to Venice and the circumjacent cities. But the general mode of life is pastoral and migratory. When their mountains are covered with snow, (as they have now been for some time,) they descend, in search of warmth and herbage, to the plains, and you may see their beasts feeding on the ramparts of Padua, and the masters hutted under the walls. The same may be observed of them in all the odd corners and suburbs of Vicenza, and various other low-land towns.

There is something very remarkable in the physiognomy of this people, who bear about them evident marks of a Teutonic origin. This is a wide word; and, there are those who trace them up to a more certain stem, and will have them to be the remains of the wreck of the Cimbri, defeated by Marius and Catulus. This opinion derives some countenance from Strabo, who, in his fifth book, amongst some other races, whom he plants in this tract of country, specifies the "*Simbri, è quibus nomini Romano hostes extiterunt aliqui.*" But it is always to be remembered that he speaks of different nations occupying the country I am describing, and of the scattered *Simbri*, or *Cimbri*, as only one amongst several. But, if the region

was occupied at the first, as it should appear, by various tribes, these mongrel mountaineers mingled their blood, in after-times, with several other swarms, issuing out of what has been called the great northern hive. Ancient historians have recorded many such local irruptions, and, above all, *that* in the time of Theodoric; who assigned to a quantity of northern men, habitations and lands amongst these mountains.

Instead therefore of considering these people as legitimate sons of the *Cimbri*, it is surely more consonant to all the evidence of history, to say that the flux and reflux of Teutonic invaders at different periods, deposited this back-water of barbarians; who have no better title to the denomination they have assumed, than the inhabitants of Kent and Sussex have to a Belgic, or those of Suffolk to a Danish, origin.

There is, in truth, no other foundation for this claim set up by the inhabitants of the *Sette Communi*, than the passage of Strabo, which I have mentioned; and there is no evidence of this claim having been advanced previous to the year 1597, when, in an account of an episcopal visit to *Asiago*, I find the following observation, "*Cimbros se esse asserunt.*" From that time to this, they have been voted Cimbrians, upon what

grounds, you, who are acquainted with the ordinary mode of reasoning in such cases, may easily conjecture. Not being satisfied, I addressed myself on this point to a learned person of the race who had collected much matter touching his tribe, and I subjoin the answer in *totidem verbis*: "I nostri popoli sono pieni di vivacità, corraggiosi, d'un animo nobile e generoso, industriosi, pieni di talento, gran cacciatori e bravi soldati, *caratteri che* DIMOSTRANO *la loro origine, benchè lontana, da una nazione delle più antiche e leali del mondo.*"

The person who furnished me with this and some other answers to queries which I addressed to him, is about to publish on this subject, and much is here expected at his hands. But if you are curious to see what has already been printed respecting this people and their pretensions, take a few examples, not selected from amongst the most ridiculous. Thus we are told that their language is Teutonic, but not intelligible to their German neighbours, and this is forsooth a test of Cimbrism; for, though not intelligible to Germans, it is to Danes; more, it is the purest Danish; but Danish, forsooth, is Cimbric; therefore, the inhabitants of the *Sette Communi* are *Cimbri*. Q. E. D.

Thus we are told by *Busching*, that "in this

district is preserved the ancient Cimbric language, or (to speak more exactly) the modern *Saxon* idiom; but in such perfection, that Frederic IV. of Denmark, who satisfied himself, in his own person, of the truth, declared that it was not spoken in *so polished* a manner in his own court"—and this account, though in itself contradictory, we are (heaven help us!) expected to believe. But, not to let the cause be prejudiced by a bad advocate, and supposing his Danish Majesty to have said, *not* that he had never heard *Saxon*, but that he had never heard *Danish* spoken in so *genuine* a manner in his court, and supposing the thousand oral traditions, yet preserved here, of this Prince and members of the *Sette Communi* were true (though one must be a beast to believe them), what is to be deduced from them, other than that this people speak Danish?—which is, after all, a lie. But, not to waste words on this matter, I send you a specimen of Bossuet's Catechism, translated into their tongue, and which will probably convey some preciser notions than those with which we have been hitherto favoured. The learned who have heretofore written on the subject perhaps considered this as too simple and vulgar an expedient.

A subordinate point appeared to me to deserve

investigation; to wit, whether they had any national denomination amongst themselves, which, like our highland name of *Gaël*, might be indicative of their origin. But though I rummaged books and interrogated all who had made a study of this people, I could never find one, dead or living, who had ever made the inquiry. Being however persuaded that this was very essential to the investigation of the question, I sought out these savages in their huts and hired farms, and talked with such as could speak Italian, both in my own person and through an Italian servant. But, as to the point at issue, all assured me they had no name for themselves but that of the *Sette Communi*. At last, my servant asserted that he had found one who said they *had* another name in their own language, which this brighter barbarian informed me was *Sieben perghe!*

You will probably, as well as myself, see nothing in this but the translation of the Italian name of the *Sette Communi*. But what changes might not be rung upon it by one who was disposed to chime into the ordinary cant of the hunters of national monuments! "*Sieben perghe*, it is true," they would say, "may signify *seven burghs*. But these words may also signify *seven mountains*, or *seven shepherds*." In the first case,

they would therefore probably send us in search of the origin of these people to some city situated upon seven hills, as to Rome or Constantinople; in the second, we should have to hunt out seven leaders of pastoral tribes; and find them perhaps in the Tartarian tales!

One more circumstance appears to me to be interesting in the story of the *Sette Communi*.

It should seem, that the fidelity with which they served the lords, to whom they became subject, had won from these petty tyrants many privileges at an early period of modern Italian story, and there exist authentic monuments of those accorded them by the *Visconti* and the *Scaligers*. They did not experience less indulgence from the Venetian republic on falling under her dominion; for, though they were subjected, as to many points, to the provincial government of the circle in which they lay, they in many other respects legislated for themselves, and may be said to have had a parliament of their own, whose place of sittings is still to be seen in the town of *Asiago*. It will, however, be scarcely necessary to add, that the *Sette Communi* lost their privileges on being subjected to the yoke of Austria. They are now entirely subjected to the provincial government of Vicenza.

I have now put together all that appeared to me *worthy of notice*, in what has been written, or reported of this people: but if I had extracted one half of what has actually been put in print, on this subject, I might have filled a quarto. Believing, however, that you have, as well as myself, little taste for hunting *possibilities* under the disguise of *probabilities*, I abstained from the task; considering that *should* you be given to this unsubstantial chase, we have sufficient home-brewed trash of the kind without resorting to foreign markets.

The weather, which has driven the inhabitants of the *Sette Communi* into the plains, seems to have pursued them; yet, nobody here, except myself, has lighted a fire, though the fleas are already put down by the cold; a riddance which I consider as counterbalancing the worst that winter can do unto me. People here do not usually light their fires till after St. Martin's day, which falls, I think, about the 10th of November.

P. S. I send you, according to my promise, a specimen of the language of the *Sette Communi*, in the title-page and *first school* of the Catechism I alluded to.

Dar Klóane Catechismo vor dez Béloseland vortrághet in z'gaprecht von Siben Perghen. In Seminarien von Padebe. 1813.

ÉARSTE SCHULE.

VON ME MÁCHENSICH Z'HALGHE KRÉÜZE.

Móastar. *Sáitar iart Christan?*

Scular. Ja: ich pinz az Gott vorghèltz.

M. *Bas ist an Christan?*

S. Ar ist dear, da ist gutófet, un clobet, un professàrt baz de hatüz galiarnet Jesu Christo.

M. *Baz ist, da máchetüz dorkénnen vor Christan?*

S. Baz de máchetüz dorkénnen vor Christan, ist dez halghe Kréüze, ba bar machen séghentenüz.

M. *Séghentach sait.*

S. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.

M. *Benne nóatetz séghensich?*

S. Af schmórghezen af me stenan auf, af schábacen af me ghenan slafan, un héventen aan, un ríventen di grözorsten arbot, ba bar machen.

LETTER XXV.

Anecdotes illustrative of the Roman Government.

Vicenza, October, 1817.

You will of course have heard of the attempt upon Lucian Buonaparte's family by Roman banditti, in the neighbourhood of *Frascati*. A similar but yet more monstrous anecdote has just been communicated to me, and as the victims are of less note and the story may not have reached you, I shall send you the particulars.

An elderly gentleman, the inhabitant of a villa in the Roman state, walking out with his two daughters, was surprized, at a turning of his own wall, by ruffians, who carried him off together with his children. His infirmities, however, preventing his keeping up with the gang, he was murdered by them; a proceeding by no means uncommon with the Roman and Neapolitan banditti. The daughters, after having undergone "outrage worse than death,"

were afterwards ransomed by the miserable mother.*

This sad story recals to my memory some circumstances which befel me during a journey from Rome to Naples, and back from Naples to Rome, accomplished a few years ago, which I am tempted to put upon paper, because it may serve to give some general idea of the Roman government, and not be wholly useless to you, if you should ever execute your southern tour. The first thing which I shall mention took place at my first departure from that capital, in my progress to the south.

I had purchased some books, on subjects of art, at Rome, which I had thoughts of sending home by sea, from Naples; and on the eve of departure, sent for the custom-house officers to seal my baggage, that I might not be pestered with other fiscal visitations in the Roman state.

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* The tribes of thieves were afterwards admitted to an honourable capitulation; and surrendered for a specified term, on condition of being lodged and fed at public charge. Will it be believed that English ladies went to see them and made them presents? an Italian gentleman asked me if this was in admiration of their *most distinguishing propensity*.

The officers, who were very civil people, accordingly examined my effects, and having found nothing contraband in the first boxes, applied their seals to them: but, on arriving at a case of books, they said their power did not extend to the protection of these, and that none *whatever* could be carried out of Rome, without a license. As it was late, and I was to set off before day-break, I was in despair of accomplishing my retreat with bag and baggage; when fortunately a red-legged prelate dropped in, who, being a member of the *ruota*, delivered my lumber from the embargo.

The roads were at this time infested with banditti; but, having profited by the first moment of calm, I made my run, and escaped safe into port. I had not been very long at Naples when the mischief, unchecked in the papal state, spread to the Neapolitan. Murat, however, or rather his government, (for he had now departed on his Quixotical expedition,) soon took measures for ridding the kingdom of this pest; and I, having set out on my return, found all the suspicious part of the road guarded by the inhabitants, priest and peasant, who had been conscribed for the purpose, and were hutted, in parties, at the distance of a mile each from the other.

This protection ceased at the confines;* but having taken four horses at the last post, I bribed my post-boys into the promise of driving, at a gallop, to *Terracina*, which was only five miles distant; a space they traversed at full speed, and, *Sic me servavit Apollo.*

From this place to *Cisterna*, the road was said to be impassable; and at the inn at *Terracina* were three men who had been carried up the mountains by banditti, as hostages, whilst their servant went to *Cisterna* to collect their ransom, fixed, like a military requisition, at so many crowns, so many silver watches, so many pair of shoes, &c. all which having been safely delivered, the hostages, who were of the neighbourhood of *Cisterna*, were released. A fourth, whose accent betrayed the distance of his home, and consequently the hopelessness of ransom, was stript and butchered in cold blood.

Having been informed at *Terracina*, that there was a party of *sbirri* there, who had escorted an

* A few patroles towards the Neapolitan frontier would have ensured the safety of the road, and would, one should have thought, have been requisite as a guard against a surprize from the Neapolitans. There was moreover a garrison at *Terracina*, which had no employment.

English lady thither, and who must return, either with cargo or in ballast, to Rome; I engaged them for a small sum in preference to a military escort, whom I must have paid higher, and who, I knew, would have abandoned me to my fate at the first approach of the enemy. Taking these people therefore for my guard, and breaking up from my quarters at an unexpected hour, often an important precaution against banditti, where "the innkeepers are their friends," I proceeded upon my journey.

Having learned, during this, that a part of my escort, who were in other carriages, were themselves reclaimed assassins, I joined them at the first halting-place, one of those spacious and desolate caravanseras which one finds at intervals in the Pontine marshes.

There was much that was dramatic in the assemblage, scenery and *costume;* besides I was in hopes of picking up some information as to modes of life, which at least promised something untold. My messmates were, however, mighty guarded as to their former habits, and I could not fish out any thing which formed the object of my search. But as in seeking one thing, we continually find another, perhaps equally worth looking after, so they entertained me with some stories which struck me

as curious, and one of which I select as illustrative of the morality and policy that distinguish the capital of Christendom.

I have already said that in Italy, (probably from the absence of internal commerce and other effects of the accursed system of *divide et impera*, which has led their princes to sow and perpetuate all sorts of feuds and factions,) town is divided against town, and village against village.

Now two of the latter, in the Roman state, which were in this condition, had, it seems, each formed a small set of robbers, consisting of six. These, like the parents from which they sprang, had a sort of civil quarrel amongst themselves for their leisure hours; to wit, when their arms were not employed against the common enemy, the public.

At last one of the gangs shewed itself desirous of coming to an accommodation, and, the overture having been well received, invited its opposite to a supper, which was to be the sign and cement of reconciliation. The parties met; but a grave burgess remarks, in some electioneering-farce, that "'tis a dangerous thing to drink *peace and unanimity*, and that he never knew no good come on it;" a truth which was eminently proved on the present occasion. The

entertainers, having, amidst these peace-libations, by some trick, kept themselves sober, and intoxicated their guests, massacred them one and all, repaired to Rome, told their story, obtained their pardon, and were instantly enrolled in the police establishment of the head of the Christian world.

One more anecdote, and I have done. At Rome I hired horses to take me all the way to Florence, of a man who was also carrying thither a cart-load of cheese. My own luggage having been sealed, I was free from custom-house visits, but was continually obliged to bring to for the cheese-cart, and it was on this occasion I first learnt that all export articles of agriculture were still subject to a duty of 18 per cent., having, till then, shared in the general delusion, that the annona laws were abolished.

The vicious government of the Roman state is indeed such as can only be compared with the atmosphere and the country in the midst of which it is seated; that is, to a pestiferous desert, not only destructive to all that has energy or life within its limits, but breathing plague and pestilence as far as it has breath to blow them.

LETTER XXVI.

Journey to Venice.

Venice, November, 1817.

WHILST you, in this melancholy month, see

——— la faccia del sol nascere ombrata,
Sì, che per temperanza di vapori,
L' occhio lo sostiene lunga fiata,"*

Dante.

we have lately had a long continuance of weather, that, according to Paley's notions, might make the happiness of an oyster, aye, even of an oyster of the bay of Naples. Knowing, however, that suns, which outshine the warmest which an English May ever produced, are not to be reckoned upon even in Italy, during the winter months, I determined to quit my subalpine quarters, and seek the milder temperature of the sea.

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* Whilst you behold the sun in northern sky
Rise with a washy disc scarce dimm'd by vapour,
That you may fix him with a fearless eye,

I accordingly, on the 7th of November, set out for Padua. At a few miles distance from Vicenza, I observed the use to which they applied trees, that, as usual, bounded or intersected the fields, and which are sometimes shaped in a very whimsical fashion. The tops of these, having been first pollarded, are cut almost into the shape of goblets. This fantastic mode of fashioning them, which is common in several parts of Italy, had often excited my surprize, though I had never been able to extract a better answer than that "it was the custom." I now found these plashed bowls filled with what are here called *scartoffi*, that is, the leaves of the Indian corn, placed there for the purpose of drying. Farther on I saw potatoes cultivated amidst this, the stalks of which, being at wide intervals, leave sufficient room for some low intermediate plant. Should this mode become general, the potatoe, though not well calculated for the soil and climate, will become an auxiliary vegetable of great value even on the plains of Italy; and indeed, in confirmation of this notion, I should mention that a Vicentine informed me, he had pursued this system last year, and besides the produce of the Indian corn, which was in the same proportion as his neighbour's, pulled an immense quantity of potatoes, which he sold at the rate

of two-pence a pound English, a price that may serve to give some notion of the distress of last year; since, considering the difference of the value of money, two-pence in Italy may fairly be calculated as equivalent to sixpence in England.

In another part I observed people plucking leaves, which were not too far gone, for fodder; and in another field raking those together which had fallen, for purposes of manure. If there is not active industry, there is great care and husbandry in the Italian peasantry. I was not destined to make any more observations; for, though I had dined that very day in a northern room without a fire, and with the window open, (such was the force of the sun, at four o'clock,) a fog enveloped every thing in Egyptian darkness. This, which was what we should call a sea-fog in England, had however a property with which such mists are not usually accompanied with us, a very sensible stink. They, however, often bring with them more permanent evil in Italy, and carry a pernicious blight into the standing corn. But the Italian sea-fogs are not only different in this from our English ones; for they appear to have varieties amongst themselves. At least I remember in Sicily, that I have heard speak of two, as of a dis-

tinct character, the one of which was there figuratively termed *la golpe*, and the other *il lupo*.*

To fortify myself against the fog, I stopped at the *zoco*, a sort of half-way house, which I have already mentioned, between Vicenza and Padua, and told the waiter to bring me some of the strongest wine which he had. He brought me accordingly a tumbler of white wine, which I began to swallow at a draught, but instantly pulled up, on tasting a liquor as strong as *sherry*, and which, I am persuaded, would be as good, were it kept. But the pernicious *maxims* and *maximums* of the government render this unprofitable. It is therefore sold new and raw at the rate of about two-pence English the bottle, instead of probably furnishing a profitable article of exportation. To second the illusion of its being a wine of Spanish growth, its denomination oddly enough savours of Spanish or Portugueze extraction, being known by the name of *vino di Breganza* from the district in which it is produced.

Besides this antidote against the fog, I had also provided myself with two large flagons of Vicentine wine, for immediate use, at Venice,

* The *fox* and the *wolf*; the fox, perhaps, as prejudicial to the vines, he being a notorious grape-eater.

and was therefore very apprehensive of being detained for half an hour at the gates of Padua, whilst my wine was taxing, and a minute account taken of my luggage, which I knew must be the consequence. My servant, however, told me he would extricate me from the difficulty, and I, like greater men, thought it better not to inquire into the means. He accordingly jumped off the box, within a few paces of the gate, and to the question of *Chi xelo'?* answered boldly *Un Padovàn.** I did not contradict the assertion, and the carriage rolled on, unexamined. Since my establishment at Abano, this is the first time I have ever been questioned, though I have been moving in various directions, and my accent and physiognomy must have marked me for a foreigner: so true it is that extreme severity commonly defeats itself. I slept at Padua, and, on the succeeding day's sun dispersing the fog, set out for

"the common ferry
Which trades to Venice."

The road thither, generally speaking, runs along the *Brenta*, to whose banks, under the

* Who is he?——He's a Paduan.

impressions, received from *Cazotte* and *Madame de Staël*, we attach such gay and picturesque ideas. I, however, on this occasion, confirmed myself in the persuasion, that these pictures had every thing but truth to recommend them.

There is no doubt pretty and fanciful architecture accompanied with much that is gay and pleasing in the appearance of these Venetian villas.* But all is ugly that is not the immediate creation of the builder or of the gardener. To convince you of this, I need merely describe their situation. The greater part have the turnpike-road immediately in front and between them and the river, which is navigable. The view of this, is shut out from the lower windows by a high dyke, which does not, however, always secure the houses from inundation, they lying considerably beneath the level of the road, which is, itself, occasionally overflowed. There are indeed villas and villages scattered up and down the river where there is no dyke; but here the Brenta, which is confined by locks, and has lost

* I here first noticed the custom of manning the frontier of premises, fronting the road, with statues, which are caricatures. One of the Brenta villas has some very appropriate to its situation, for the proprietor has garnished the garden wall with toads in gala, with sword and *chapeau bras*.

the last remains of the character which distinguishes it in the Bassanese, stagnates into a large canal, which traverses a long file of marshy meadows.

Having come to the apparent end of my journey, I found myself deposited in a place which I did not immediately recollect was not that to which I had told the post-boy to convey me. But finding a custom-house and gondolas, I bade my servant take measures to prevent my being annoyed by the *doganieri* of Venice, and embarked. He returned with two tickets, which I considered as amulets, and put off.

Your own *Canalettos* will have given you a better idea of the gondola than I could convey; but I will try to describe what Picture cannot paint. You will recollect that his gondoleers have always their face to the prow. They row, by holding, or (as I believe it is termed upon the Thames) by backing water. They feather the oar at the conclusion of the stroke, beneath the surface, and thus bring its blade as we do, though in a different manner, parallel to the horizon. Such is the way in which the gondoleers handle their oars, when there are two of them. When there is only one, something more of manœuvre is required; for, as the boatman rows on one side, with a single oar, the

effect of his labour would, if uncorrected, constantly impel his boat to the opposite side, and keep it turning in a succession of circles. But after having completed his stroke, and feathered under water, he brings his oar, still beneath the surface, to the place where he is to recommence it, so that there is a continuity of action and reaction. These are not however equal, because the impulse is the most violent, and is besides given with the *blade* of his oar, and its lateral tendency corrected by the *edge*. But though the theory is explicable, great nicety must be observed in the practice, and in this, the dexterity of the gondoleers is admirable. Their mode of rowing, which is in both cases unaccompanied by any sort of splash, seconds the calm, which is produced by the sombre appearance of the *gondola*.

In one of these boats then, we dropt down a lazy stream, very much like what are called *cuts* in our fen counties, the banks and general appearance of the country being precisely the same. After about a mile's paddling, we arrived at *Fusina*, the place where I had intended to have embarked, and which is situated precisely at the mouth of the creek. Here I was ordered, notwithstanding the spells I bore about me, to land my luggage, that it might be over-

hauled and taxed;* an operation which t[illegible] some time, and drew very audible curses from my gondoleers, who told me that they feared a *caligo* like that of the last evening, in which many boats had wandered about all night in the lagoon; fortunate in that they did not blunder into the open part beyond Venice.

But the *caligo* did not come; the custom-house officers finished their task, and we launched into the æstuary. It was dead low water, and all mud, except a narrow creek which afforded a passage. Of these there are two, in the hither lagoon, one from *Mestre*, and the one by which I arrived. Judging by the booms, which marked out our channel on either side, it should seem that the rise of the tide was about three feet, which is much more than is necessary to cover the mud. But this, from its own feebleness and from the long and narrow form of the Adri-

* I extract a passage from the old book of travels picked up at Vicenza, which may shew the difference between ancient and modern Venice in this respect. The author says: "Travellers are rarely stopt on account of customs or imposts, in the state of Venice. The toll-gatherers saw us enter into the lagunes, without speaking a word to us, though we had a considerable quantity of baggage; but in other parts of Italy, the tolls are very frequent and troublesome."

which gives great effect to certain raking winds, is often, as seamen call it, *out of its course*, and very variable in its rise and fall.

The threatened *caligo*, (you will have discovered that this means *mist*, in Venetian,) and which appeared like a low curtain on the verge of the horizon, now entirely clearing away, we traversed the lagoon "with merry wind and weather," and, finally, disembarked at Venice.

LETTER XXVII.

General Description of the Lagoon.

Venice, November, 1817.

I TRIED in my last letter to give an idea of the landward side of the Lagoon, of which Venice forms the centre, but shall now attempt it in its full extent, though on a diminutive scale.

This great mud æstuary, in its relation to the Adriatic, may be likened to a side closet shut off from a room by a partition; for such is precisely its form. The partition which divides it from the open sea, running from one end to the other, is composed of different pieces with openings, which, if we pursue the same comparison, may be considered as so many doors; and in a line with these, though not uniformly straight, are the passages or channels which bring ships to Venice. The compartments of this partition are a long spit of land on the side of the *Trevisana*, divided from the continent by backwaters, æstuaries, and canals, the island of *Saint Erasmus*, that styled the *Lido*, and the *Murazzi*, massive walls built on shoals running from near the *Lido* to *Chioggia*. The *Murazzi* are, com-

paratively speaking, of modern creation, but previous to their construction, outworks existed of a similar, though less permanent, description.

The soil of the islands within this barrier and the bottom of the lagoon is every where composed of mud, but without, that is, towards the sea, we find the complete character of our Sussex shores, except near the mouth of channels where mud has been carried out and deposited. Thus the lagoon-side, and the interior of the Lido, presents the appearance of meadows bordering the Southampton river, but crossing to the sea-side of it, you find sand hills and a long level of beach.

The composition of the islands and the bottom of this æstuary seem, at first sight, to justify the policy which was adopted, I believe, about the middle of the fifteenth century, and ended in the seventeenth; viz. that of turning the course of rivers which formerly discharged themselves into this lagoon and guiding their waters into the open sea. But though these rivers, before they were diverted, may have tended to raise the bottom and fill up channels by the deposition of the malm or mud which they held in suspension, it appears to me, that they would have been better employed in England; where our

men of science have so happily studied the principle of turning the arms of nature against herself.—I allude to the possibility of penning the waters thus supplied and occasionally sweeping channels with their efflux.

But if this was too expensive a scheme for the late Venetian government, you will easily imagine that it was not of a nature to be adopted by the Austrian. *That* government has indeed evinced such strange ignorance and perverseness on all subjects connected with the waters and commerce of this place, that I can only compare it to a child who, having long cried for a watch, and at last become possessed of it, renders it useless by gratuitous mischief, or neglect.

I shall have, and indeed have already had, too many occasions to speak of the first species of wrong; I confine myself in this letter to the second. The French had not this sin to answer for; at least not to the same extent. At present not even the canals of the town are cleansed, except where the immediate ill consequences of the neglect are felt by the government, as in the neighbourhood of the arsenal; though this is productive of manifest inconvenience, and is likely to be of prejudice to the health of the inhabitants.

A considerable time ago, a rent was made in

the *Murazzi*, which might have been repaired for a trifling sum of money, if taken in time, but there were representations to be made to Vienna, and resolutions and counter-resolutions to be adopted. In the mean time the breach was increasing, and a heavy sea and high tide having laid the Place of St. Mark under water, it was at last held advisable to stop the leak. I need scarcely add that this operation now cost ten times the sum which would have sufficed in the beginning.

This single fact may serve to give you an idea of the way in which things are managed here; but if you wish to form to yourself a yet more familiar notion both of the monkeys and bears who have played, or are now playing at being beavers, you may follow them into their habitations and study their domestic instincts.

One of the first conveniences which one expects in a good house at Venice, is that of having *la riva in casa*, as it is styled here; that is, to be able to have your boat laid alongside your own threshold, so that you step from the hall into the gondola: the next degree of comfort is, the having *la riva in faza*, viz. to have the landing-place opposite, you having to traverse a quay to get to your boat of about the breadth of the foot-way, which you pass in order to arrive at your carriage in London.

There is not, I will venture to say, a good house in Venice which has not one or other of these conveniences; the palaces have all of them the first: yet did the French build and the Austrians finish a palace for their emperor, so far removed from a *rio* that the imperial possessor cannot reach his gondola in bad weather, without a wetting. It is precisely as if the Prince Regent should have built a magnificent house in the interior of Spring Gardens terrace, without an access to his carriage. The anecdote is trifling in itself, but will serve to shew the entire ignorance both of French and Austrians, of whatever concerns this world of waters.

The lagoon has suffered from many causes both natural and artificial: yet whatever changes this may have experienced, it is curious to observe, that while an immense part of the Italo-Adriatic shore has undergone strange transformations, the prospect which I see from St. Mark's steeple is precisely Livy's picture, in his account of a piratical attempt upon Padua, by the Spartans, about a century after Rome was sacked by the Gauls.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Localities of Venice—its Political Divisions. Those of Italy in general, and their Consequences.

Venice, November, 1817.

I PASS from a general view of the lagoon to that of its metropolis.

Seeking for a comparison at home, I should say that Venice (always allowing for the difference of size) had more the appearance of Southampton, seen from the water, than that of any other city which I am acquainted with.

The circumstance of its being built on piles on small islands, or rather shoals, in the centre of the æstuary I have described, is known to every one. But there are other circumstances attending its site, which are absolutely necessary towards forming an accurate idea of this anomalous city.

Venice then is built on two great collections of shoals, which are divided from each other by a serpentine channel, called the *Canalazo* or Grand Canal, which is bestrid by the bridge of

the *Rialto.** It follows that the city may be divided into two great parts, made up of small islands, and each part separated from the other, except at this bridge. All the shoals constituting the two separate parts, thus intersected, are again connected together by smaller bridges which cross the streams dividing these numerous shallows. These bridges are frequent, and being very steep, are cut into easy steps; so that, taking a walk in Venice, you are perpetually going up and down stairs. The bridge of the *Rialto* is necessarily the steepest of these.

The small canals, or *rii,* as they are termed, which are bestrid by these bridges, are the water-streets of Venice; but there is no part of either of the two divisions to which you may not also go more directly by land, through narrow passages called *cale.* These may be considered as an unfavourable likeness of Cranbourn Alley and its cognate lanes. There are besides several small squares, entitled *campi,* or fields.

The most considerable houses of Venice have each a land and water door; but many being built in the interior of these shoals can have

* Or bridge of the deep stream, i. e. *rio alto*; in Italian, *rivo alto.*

no immediate access by water. This (as I have observed incidentally to another subject) is a considerable inconvenience, as it limits the use and comfort of a gondola.

There is sometimes a wharf or a footway along the banks of the *rii*, (called a *riva*,) and usually secured by a parapet, bored for a wicket; but the *rii* oftener extend from house to house, and these then consequently rise on either side from out of the water. The same may be said of the Grand Canal as of the *rii*, though here and there, there is a small extent of terrace, or *riva*, in front of the houses. But a map must come in aid of this description, which is, however, necessary, both towards forming an exact idea of Venice, and understanding the ensuing portion of my letter.

The difficulty of maintaining the peace of a populous city, thus divided into two parts, which are united only at a single point, must be obvious. Yet never was city kept in a more perfect state of tranquillity than Venice was by her aristocratical government, and that too (to the praise of the fallen republic be it spoken) without the assistance of a garrison. Besides indirect ways of accomplishing this object, the immediate mode of preventing political tumults lay in seconding the rivalry of two popular factions,

who appear to have had no better bond of union, or cause of hatred, than that of being born in different quarters and parishes; though it is not to be supposed that the whole force of the city mustered on one side or the other; for some parishes affected a neutrality. The two factions were distinguished by the names of the *Nicoloti* and the *Castelani*. The only active members of these confederacies were the gondoleers and rabble: but all persons, of whatever rank or situation, with reference to the district in which they were born, were reputed to belong to one or other of them; and even foreigners, arriving at Venice, were, according to the quarter in which they disembarked, enrolled as honorary, though of course inefficient, members of the contending factions.

The distinguishing colours of these (for all associations delight in so intelligible a symbol of party) are black and red. These were manifested in their caps and sashes: and even to the present day a *Castelano* detests black as much as a chamelion; and a *Nicoloto*, in his abhorrence of red, could scarcely be surpassed by a turkey-cock.

No light, as far as I am informed, has been ever thrown upon the origin of these divisions; but it will be a more interesting task to guage

the extent of their rivalry. This usually shewed itself in what may be considered as boys'-play. Once, we are told, it consisted in one party's defending the possession of a bridge against its opposite: latterly in rowing matches, and feats of strength and dexterity. But though their public animosities found so easy a vent, their private quarrels, arising out of these, took a dye of deeper hostility, and were frequently decided by the knife.

You will naturally be struck by the strong resemblance which these factions bear to the *blue* and *green** of Rome and Constantinople, one of which indeed was composed, or supposed to be composed, of Venetians. Yet were their effects widely different. In Constantinople, owing to the partial folly of the emperors, who usually leaned to one side or the other, they mingled mischievously in matters of state; while in Venice, nicely balanced, and played one against the other, they served to maintain the tranquillity of the republic. A single instance will illustrate the character of the policy which was observed towards them. Though the being

* The blue faction of these charioteers was termed the Venetian, and the blue the *Venetian colour*. For more information on this subject, see *Filiasi su' primi Veneti*, and *Maffei degli Anfiteatri*.

a *Castelano* or a *Nicoloto* depended on a question of birth, and not of habitancy, the Doge was an exception to the rule, and, wherever he might have been born, was, from his residence at St. Mark's, always looked upon as a *Castelano*. To put themselves on something like a level with their antagonists, the *Nicoloti* therefore annually elected a sort of anti-doge, and this man, some clever waterman, in his quality of Doge of the *Nicoloti*, had a bark, place, and some sort of authority in the procession formed at the Ascension for the yearly espousals of the Adriatic sea.

But neither the government of the French nor Germans, who both, though in very different degrees, pursued a domineering system of policy, found their account in the encouragement of these factions. They are consequently going out, though they every now and then emit some sparks indicative of their former vivacity; for there is still at the bottom a sort of smouldering fire, which kindles on being stirred. A Venetian friend of mine, being informed that the son of one of his maid-servants was about to separate from his wife, questioned the mother as to the cause; when she exclaimed, "Lord! your excellence, what good could ever come of a marriage between a *Castelana* and a *Nicoloto?*"

These parties may afford some specimen of the greater divisions of Italy, where district is divided against district, town against town, and province against province.

But it may be supposed that these rivalries resemble those of our bordering counties, which evaporate in a cricket or a foot-ball match.* I shall again resort to an example of the same kind as the last, in illustration of their real character. A Roman lady, to whom I am indebted for this anecdote, had long had a favourite Tivolese maid, who at last gave her warning. As her pretexts for leaving her service were evidently feigned, her lady did every thing possible to ascertain the cause, in the hope of being able to remove it. All such attempts however were vain.

Shortly after her departure, the real grievance was discovered by a fellow-servant. She had, it seems, declared to her, "that it was time she

* It would seem however that we too once dealt in this odd sort of local animosity, and that too, when we had other and sufficient matter for quarrel. The factions of northern and southern men troubled the peace of Oxford even later than the reign of Elizabeth; and it was long found necessary to choose a proctor alternately from the northern and southern side of Trent.

was gone,—that she found herself growing attached to her mistress, and it never should be said that a Tivolese had loved a Roman." I imagine both parties would be puzzled to find a justification of their enmity, though *you* may perhaps trace it up to some middle-age quarrel. *They* seem to look upon it in much the same light with which Sir Lucius considered such matters, "the quarrel is a mighty pretty quarrel," and investigation would be a piece of useless curiosity.

The spirit of unmeaning factions, arising out of the great divisions of Italy, is, no doubt, the strongest obstacle to the union of her provinces, whilst it affords the strongest reason for desiring it; since her divisions, independently of other great political considerations, must be looked on as one of the fountain heads of many mischiefs, and one especial cause of debasement of the national character. Their immediate effects are visible in the infestment of the roads by banditti, who, from the proximity of some territorial boundary, have always a harbour under their lee; in the cheats arising out of the change of coin, at the distance of every few miles; and in other protections afforded to crime or facilities to fraud. The spirit in which these crimes are perpetrated, arising out of the same

cause, is yet worse. These divisions have spread a wretched illiberal tone of thinking and feeling, and taught the lower Italians to consider each other much as the Arabian tribes regard those who are not of the same lineage and kindred. Every stranger, every one but a citizen of the same province, is considered as a foreigner, and every foreigner is an object of spoil. In some places, (as at Bologna,) there is one fixed price at the theatres for inhabitants, and another for foreigners; and I have been assured by a Florentine, who had conducted me to shops, and informed me about prices, that he had not only incurred much undeclared odium by his conduct, but had even been openly reproached by shopkeepers, for having stood between them and the spoliation *of a foreigner*. The English as richer, or reputed richer, than others, are more peculiarly chosen as victims, and a British equipage is considered by the Italians, as we are told Mr. Park's coffle was by the Negroes; to wit, as a "*dumfonlong*, or a thing sent to be eaten."

Such are the direct and immediate effects of the territorial divisions of Italy: but various other evils might be pointed out, all of which are derived from a similar source. Thus, even in despotic countries, a very considerable influence upon morals must be attributed to the press and

the public character of distinguished literary men. These men in Italy have put their sentiments and characters upon record, the greater part of them having alternately flattered the French or Austrian emperor, and changed sides and back again, with a servility so ready and so repeated, that one's disgust is almost lost in the absurdity of the thing. I might say that neither England nor France has afforded such instances of barefaced baseness, as are to be found amongst the literary men of modern Italy. To what is this to be attributed but to the utter impossibility of their securing independence by their honest labours?—for what can be the value of a copyright which perhaps does not extend ten miles from the seat of the press? Literary property is absolutely worth nothing in Italy: it is evident therefore that literary men must be at the entire disposal of him who can pay them, and their baseness is to be considered as a matter of necessity.

I have touched this subject to shew how wide is the cause of mischief, and what indirect and incidental evils spring from it, besides those which are immediately apparent. The instance, however, which I have adduced, naturally leads me to another reflection and of a very different description. Can we do otherwise than admire

a people, who, under a system so hostile to genius, have made such gigantic strides both in literature and science? This, as well as all I have observed of them, leads me to the conclusion, that whatever there is of good in their character is their own, and achieved in despite of circumstances; whilst what there is of evil, is the necessary consequence of the destiny which has befallen them in the great lottery of nations. The Greeks themselves have not drawn a worse.

LETTER XXIX.

Advantages of Venice—its Society, Scirocco, &c.

Venice, November, 1817.

THERE are few places which present more conveniences as a winter-residence than Venice. The gondola is a cheap substitute for a carriage; and it would appear that this city equalized as much as possible the comforts of life in all conditions. We are told that the *Abbé* (afterwards Cardinal) *du Bois*, had always a fowl upon the spit; so that he had but a short time to wait for a meal, whenever he felt inclined to take it. This advantage may be enjoyed at Venice without the same inconvenience or expense; for the *trattorìas*, or eating-houses, as well as the coffee-houses, are always open, and well supplied, from noon to five or six o'clock on the succeeding morning. Every thing that is to be bought (and most things *are* to be bought) may be had at all hours.

What is true of such things may almost be predicated of others. As, if you are inclined to eat, you may find wherewithal to eat at all hours;

so, if you are inclined to society, the favourite society of Venice, I mean that of the coffee-houses, (where both sexes assemble,) is, generally speaking, to be also enjoyed at all hours. To a certain degree this is even applicable to private society. There are several ladies here, who open their houses; where from nine at night till three in the morning, there is a continual flux and reflux of company of different ages, sexes and conditions, not to speak of many smaller circles. Here, all foreigners are well received; but, to be an Englishman, is to bring with you a sure letter of recommendation. He, who is once asked, is always welcome, and may rest assured that he is not brought there merely to be looked at as a *lion*, and then perhaps left to lament himself as a "lost monster." Moreover he may go in boots, in a great coat, and, to some small parties, even in a *tabarro*, the cloak of the country,* and, when

* Indeed a Venetian *of the old original school* would apologize for taking off his tabarro in society as we should for keeping on a great coat; for this was formerly a *gala*, as well as an every day garb, and adapted to all societies and seasons. There were, in the first place, in cloth, the scarlet *tabarro* for

there, without being squeezed or stewed, find people, right and left, who are anxious and qualified to converse with him. The principal circles are those of La Dama *Albrizzi*, known by her literary works, and *la Benzòn*, the real or supposed heroine of every Venetian ballad in which a light-haired lady is celebrated.

The society of Venice may indeed be compared to the fire in the glass-houses of London, which is said to be never out; for there is also a continual morning assemblage at the house of one lady or another, who, in the phrase of the country, "*tiene appartamento*," or, in that of London,

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full dress, the blue *tabarro* for bad weather, the white *tabarro* for fine weather and half-dress, and the black *tabarro* in silk and lined with silk, to be worn with a masque during carnival: these were the *Poco Curante*'s winter wardrobe. For the spring and autumn, there was again a white *tabarro* in silk, and lined with silk, of any capricious colour; and, for the summer, a white *tabarro*, still in silk, but without a lining. When I add that the cloth *tabarros* were faced from top to bottom with velvet, and that seven English yards go to the building one, you may form some notion of the general magnificence of the Venetian gentleman, of the days which are gone by.

Was this, like various other usages, a remnant of the habits of the race from which these people were descended? It is remarkable that (as was, I believe, the case with the Romans) they never travelled *togati*.

is "at home." This appears to be a sort of substitute for the *casinos*, now nearly extinguished. Of these *coteries* I cannot speak from experience; but the playing at company in sunshine presents but a melancholy sort of idea. However this may in reality be, society at Venice is on so very easy and rational a footing, that if it is to be enjoyed any where, it is here; the more so, as it seldom breaks into the extravagancies it does in other countries.

Thus the Venetians have little taste for balls, and seem to agree in the principle, that,

"Of all dull things, the dullest is festivity,
With change of dance, chalk'd floor, and chandeliers,
Tormenting, with tyrannical activity,
Your unprotected eyes and passive ears."
Court and Parliament of Beasts.

But the absence of such a disturbance is not the only recommendation of this town, as a place of quiet. It presents a complete image of repose, from the absence of horses and carriages. And, that means may not be wanting to turn this to account, there is an excellent public library, a relic of the foundations of the republic, civil and monastical.

As to literary society however, though clever men are to be found in Venice, I do not believe that it exists. For general society; this has probably gained from the change of government and the influx of foreigners: for it must be confessed that the Patrician pantaloon is, familiarly speaking, a *Bore*. To violate the Horatian precept, and attempt

"depingere fluctibus *aprum*,"

I should say that this animal's mode of worry, was by interrogation, which an Italian friend of ours attributes to his being of the *genus*, princeps; and having acquired this habit during his exercise of sovereignty.

But if Venice offers many conveniences as a winter-residence, it is insufferable (at least to one not born within the sound of St. Mark's or St. Barnabas) during the summer months. The small canals, which (to borrow a phrase I once heard from an English lady's maid) have not, at any time, a pretty smell with them, in hot weather stink outright, though, (what is singular enough,) an intense sun, acting upon shallow and muddy water, produces no serious disease. It however, no doubt, gives rise to many dys-

peptic affections, rendering a summer's residence here unwholesome, though not dangerous.* Some other cause or causes combine with this main spring of mischief, and the *Sciroćco*, a wind charged with all the venom of Africa, seems to be an active agent on the occasion.

What still remains difficult to explain, is the greater or less salubriousness of particular parts of the city.† As a general rule however, it may be remarked, that here, as well as elsewhere, it is best to seek an open spot, that is, in the *piazza*, or one of the *campi*, to which one is the more inclined, from the natural anxiety which an Englishman feels to see sunshine.

It is probably the relaxing effect of the *Sciroc* which makes the Venetian women so painfully sensible to the smell of perfumes; for it may be remarked that such morbid sensibility is confined to places visited by pestiferous winds; such as Naples, Venice, and Rome. The Eng-

* It ought to be mentioned that the annual mortality amongst the Venetian nobles was very small, three in a hundred; but these men, though of irregular lives, it must be recollected, were placed by fortune above the reach of diseases, which waste the poor; and besides never made Venice their summer residence.

† In some of these, silver tarnishes, an effect not commonly observable in other parts of this city.

lish notion, that the horror of perfumes is universal throughout this peninsula, is like our other ideas with respect to Italy. Almost all travellers generalize too much, and suppose what they find in one province must necessarily be common to all. This is so far from being true in the present instance, that I have, on former visits to this country, been half poisoned with musk, both at Verona, Milan, and Florence!

Because they are not sensible to the poison themselves, foreigners are also apt to consider the weakness I have mentioned, as a ridiculous piece of affectation: but their own exemption from such an effect probably arises from their having rendered their nerves less alive to perfumes, by the early use of them; and the effect of this may be witnessed in the Venetian women, who, while they faint at the smell of common essences, endure the fumes of incense without complaining: it is however unreasonable to imagine, that, because they have accustomed themselves to one species of odour, they should become insensible to others of a different description. For myself, I am persuaded that there is little, or no exaggeration in their supposed irritability. I recollect, when I was first at Venice, seeing a lady drop senseless from her chair under a strong smell of musk; and instances of women

in child-bed dying of aromatic pain are verified beyond the power of contradiction.

I attribute, on the grounds I have mentioned, this strange influence of perfumes to the Sciroc; but this wind, very prevalent here, has so many other singular properties, that I cannot dismiss it without some further observations; the more so, as I do not think Brydon and others have accurately described its character and effects. They talk of it (if my recollection serves me rightly,) as a dry and parching wind, probably because it blows from a country that is hot and dry: It is true indeed that this wind is attended with some of the consequences usually produced by one of such a description; thus, it makes furniture crack and fly: and I recollect, on one of the former short flights which I made to this city, sleeping in the next room to a harp, in a street facing the sea, the body of which instrument actually split, during a Sciroc. But though it produces this effect, it is not in itself hot and dry, but, so far from it, that in Malta and other places where it is to be felt in force, your hair and clothes feel precisely as they do in a fog. I had indeed once the misfortune to experience an unusually long continuance of this wind at sea, at a very short distance from the coast of Africa, and during this time the

space between decks exhibited the appearance of a wash-house, with wreaths of hot vapour which almost took away the breath. In its other effects on the human frame, it is yet more formidable, being attended, as Brydon has truly stated, with an entire prostration of strength and animal spirits. The only mitigation of this evil which I ever found, was bathing in the sea and putting on my linen without drying myself. This of course produced a certain degree of refrigeration, upon the same principle that a bottle of wine is cooled by wrapping it in wet cloths. But, from the moisture of the wind itself, the evaporation is slight and the remedy consequently defective.

If the influence of the Sciroc upon the human frame is intelligible, its various effects upon inanimate matter are less explicable; for while it rives unseasoned wood, as if it were a blast from a furnace, paint will not take, which is laid on during its continuance. These however are the summer evils of the Sciroc: in winter it is scarcely to be considered an inconvenience.

LETTER XXX.

On the ancient extemporary Comedy—the Comedies of GOLDONI *and* GASPARO GOZZI—*and the Tragedy of* ALFIERI.

Venice, November, 1817.

AN advertisement carried me to the theatre, which announced the whimsicalities of the old Venetian masques. These, not often to be enjoyed, were now announced under the title of "*Brighella* and *Truffaldino*, condemned to the galleys."

Only one of the masques, to wit, *Truffaldino*, or Harlequin, (as he is indifferently called,) really answered my expectations; but it would be unjust not to confess that the whole of this extemporary farce went off in the most fluent burst of buffoonery.

The history of this *genus* of drama deserves some illustration. Florence, in the fifteenth century, gave birth to the regular comedy, which had been preceded by ruder scenic representations in the *terza* and *ottava rima*, corresponding, for the most part, with our English

Mysteries and Moralities: but Venice, till within a comparatively late era, had contented herself with a species of comedy, once indeed common to the whole peninsula, but latterly peculiar to herself—I mean the extemporaneous, or, as it is called in Italian, the *Commedia d'arte.* I have little doubt that this dated from the earliest periods, and was, in fact, a remnant of those farces, which were once current in ancient Italy; though I do not know of any precise notice of it previous to the fifteenth century, when we find it mentioned incidentally in one of the *Canti carnascialeschi,* composed by Grazzini, called *Il Lasca.* It is here spoken of as contending with the regular comedy at Florence. The extemporaneous, once very popular in Lombardy, should seem to have spread even to Paris, and the *Scapins,* the *Mezzetins,* &c. are clearly a remnant of the race. Driven from the rest of Italy, it intrenched itself at Venice, the last of its strong holds.

It consisted of extemporaneous dialogues, the *substratum* of which was furnished by the poet, or concerted amongst the actors. These were all disguised in masks, representing ridiculous characters, drawn from particular provinces; such as *Pantaloon,* a Venetian merchant; *Tartaglia,* a stutterer, of I know not what province;

the *Doctor Balanzone*, a civilian of Bologna, the *Harlequin* and *Brighella* of Bergamo, and (if he be not here a modern interloper) *Agonìa*,* alas! a citizen of the world. I shall not describe more particularly the other masques in this place, but the very singular and distinct character of the last personage requires a few remarks; the more so as I shall have no future occasion to refer to him, whilst a specimen, which I intend to give, of the extemporaneous comedy, will introduce my readers to the remainder of its *dramatis personæ*.

Mortal Agony's dress, trunk-hose and a short mantle, do not appear to have corresponded with his character; but his bloodless countenance, broken voice, and convulsive twitches, were sufficiently indicative of his part. Such a masque does not seem to promise much mirth; but what will not buffoonery bend to its purposes? Take the following example: *Brighella* and *Truffaldino*, both half-starved, discuss the means of getting a livelihood. *Truffaldino*, in a ridiculous dialogue, proposes medicine, and

* *Agonia* does not mean the agony of modern English, but, as in our ancient language, the agony of death.

Mortal Agony, entering at that moment, is chosen as a fit subject to commence operations upon. *Brighella* observes to him that he fears he is very ill. *Mortal Agony* says that it is but too true, that he has had the *terzana, che poi si è convertita in quartana—in quintana—sestana ed ottana; che ha la rabbia, la scabbia e la rogna, e'l . . . mal . . del . . . la . . ca . . . . . rogna*; and so said, to the terror of *Brighella* and *Traffaldino*, expires upon the stage. He is sometimes represented as in love, when his sighs and groans form his principal recommendation.

Mortal Agony, if not modern, was perhaps introduced during the passion for personification: or may be the representative of some more ancient masque, deflected from its original name and description. The provincial character and costume of the others induced me at first to think that *these* were rather imitations than copies of those which figured in the *Oscan* and *Atellan*, or other ancient Italian farces. Some circumstances, however, have since led me to doubt whether any great alteration has, in reality, taken place even in their dress, and whether they are not the representatives of *their* DRAMATIS PERSONÆ *costume* and all. The precise prototype of the Venetian Pantaloon is to be found in an undoubtedly

antique bronze in the possession of Mr. Payne Knight; and I saw, on a fictile vase in the royal collection at Naples, a scene between Punch* and *Brighella*, each accoutred and attitudinizing as on the modern stage.

But how have these masques been handed down to the moderns? The change from the *Magnifico* to the Pantaloon seems to explain the process. The ancient Florentines found a farcical character bequeathed to them, the type of they knew not what, but for which they discovered a likeness in their *magnifico* or grandee. After the extemporary comedy had transferred its seat from Florence to Venice, the *Magnifico* was metamorphosed into the Pantaloon. This was probably the case with the other masques. In classic Italy, these were perhaps the caricatures

* Punch, in the liberal extension of the term, i. e. as applied to a witty profligate who laughs at order, is a favourite scenic character in all countries; and I have seen *Kharaghcuse* persecute a Mufti at Constantinople with as much petulance and success as *Pulcinella* could bate a Cardinal in Italy. But, in the narrower sense of the word, *Pulcinella* is a native of Naples. Mr. Forsyth, who rejects his classical origin, recognizes in his costume the dress of the modern Apulian peasant, but this is an unfounded assertion. He does *not* wear the Apulian *costume*, nor (as I have been informed by Neapolitans) that of any other district in the kingdom.

of some noted provincial personages. When these were lost, new originals were to be found, and those were chosen for the purpose who came nearest to them in the imagination of the modern Italians.

Some however would probably contend that these masques have not even always changed their designation, for I remember a Neapolitan assuring me that the name of *Pulcinella* bespoke his origin: this being evidently derived from πολυ and κινεω, i. e. from his much wriggling, the final *cella*, I suppose, being a mere endearing diminutive. The origin of *Pantalon*, usually termed *Pantalon de' bisognosi*, does not, however, appear to be so classical. The name is evidently derived from that of *San Patalon*, to whom a church is dedicated at Venice. A learned Italian friend has furnished me with his history, which explains the adjunct of *de' bisognosi*. He was a physician, and, from his succouring the necessitous, styled παντα ελεημων. This was syncopated into *Pantalon* in Venetian, or *Pantalcone* in Italian, and the *de' bisognosi* supplied the place of the truncated syllables. It may be added that Pantaloon is always a compassionate character on the Venetian stage.

To return to the immediate subject of discussion, the extemporary comedy of Venice: An

Englishman can scarcely figure to himself the ready wit which it was said to be the means of eliciting. He can indeed suppose the superior vivacity of actors, who, instead of pelting each other with the same often-repeated jokes, had to engage in every new conflict, with a change of weapons: but this very circumstance would preclude the idea of dexterity in the use of them; and he is naturally inclined to believe that the interest of the spectators must have been derived rather from the struggle for comparative superiority than from the absolute prowess of the combatants. Yet we are assured that they in an instant hammered into coin the rude metal which they had to work upon, and kept their audience dazzled and delighted by the brilliance of their repartees.

It is true that the theatrical jokes which yet float down the stream of time may seem to belie this panegyric; and a collection of sayings, uttered by a certain actor, in the character of *Brighella*, disappointed the expectations of the Venetian public. But it is with wit, as with wine, (at least, this is true of the most delicate species of both,) neither will bear carriage, and both must be swallowed before they have time to evaporate. In short, there is *mousseux* wit as well as *mousseux* champagne.

It may be observed also of these sallies, which pleased upon the stage, though not, in their insulated state, in the closet, that they usually sin on the side of extravagance. May not, therefore, their immediate success be as fairly cited, in evidence of the art of the wit, as the famous *passage*, quoted by Quintilian, in proof of the power of the orator? Every one knows that, alluding to a much applauded part of an oration, the fustian of which, taken separately from the rest, must be obvious to the least fastidious, he exclaims: (I quote from memory) "By what nice gradations must the orator have worked up the passions of his auditors, how must he have intoxicated their imaginations, to make them receive for sublime that which, considered by itself, must be acknowledged to be bombast!" The argument is surely as applicable in the one case as in the other.

The masques, which I have described as the vehicles of this species of humour, long maintained possession of the Venetian theatre. They were at last driven off the stage by *Goldoni*, who, on the wrecks of this fantastic dynasty, erected the empire of what he was pleased to call Regular Comedy.

It is somewhat difficult to describe the character of the productions which he has thus de-

signated; since, though they are distinguishable by a general family deformity, they differ amongst themselves in every perverse irregularity of features. One, full of business and bustle, turns upon some silly insignificant action; while, in another story, the semblance of a plot is stretched, almost to cracking, through three successive plays. To give a notion of these plots, or plans, one has for foundation, the taking possession of a new house; another, a girl's obtaining a new dress; and another, the arrangement of a freemason's supper. *This* hinges upon the extravagancies of a poor idiot; and *that* upon the comicality of poisoning one. Nor are these singular specimens of *Goldoni*'s taste. An idiot is frequently brought upon the stage as a legitimate object of mirth. There is also a second exhibition of a poisoning plot, though in this he has a little softened the horror of the catastrophe; contenting himself with the stage-convulsions of a puppy, who, having intercepted a portion of poisoned pap, becomes a vicarious sacrifice for Pantaloon, to whom it had been destined by the wife of his bosom. One comedy resembles a vulgar English farce, and another the most insipid of Mrs. Trimmer's juvenile tales.

Neither his genius, nor his acquirements, were such as to enable him to move in the walk of genteel comedy. With very little power of original invention, he never treats a subject which requires any degree of information, without exposing the grossness of his ignorance. This is particularly conspicuous in his *Avventuriere Onorato*, a piece which he appears to have contemplated with more than ordinary complacency,* and the principal character of which he considered as a happy reflection of himself. In this play, which is popular in Italy, though poison to a tramontane, the hero successively and successfully plays the physician, lawyer, &c. &c. &c. and shews himself equally ignorant of every part which he assumes.

Goldoni's ignorance of the manners of foreign countries, in which he nevertheless loves to lay the scene, is yet more conspicuously ridiculous: his blunders are such as, in default of travel, common books, or indeed common sense might have saved him from exhibiting. In one of his extravagant productions, the mistress of an English coffee-house scolds a woman whom she supposes to be married, for frequenting her room:

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* See his Life, written by himself.

but on learning she is single, apologizes; allowing that there was no impropriety in an unmarried woman's frequenting a coffee-house, for the purpose of obtaining a husband. Every one who has read the Anti-jacobin will recollect his *Lord Runnibif*, a name probably suggested to him by some malicious English wit. In another comedy, (scene London,) entitled *Pamela Maritata*, a cabinet minister waits on Lord Bonfil, the Italian Mr. Booby, on the behalf of the king, to prohibit him from divorcing his wife. *Sed ohe! jam satis est.*

Of French, or other European manners, he is quite as ridiculously ignorant. To this swarm of defects must be thrown in the sickly cant of sentiment, such as we are nauseated with in modern English comedy, the same peal of paltry, patriotic effusions, soliloquies in which honest men declare their honesty, and knaves their knavery, a very imperfect knowledge of the language in which he writes,* and a total ignorance of the

* As it may sound presumptuous in a foreigner to bring this charge, I shall shew some cause for it; and having opened at hazard on odd volume of his works, which is before me, select the first blunders which present themselves, in the first paragraph, as *per altro* instead of *però*, *Ho necessità* instead of *Ho*

art which he professes; and you have one side of the medal.

But there is a reverse. Indeed it would scarcely be possible for a man to obtain the successes achieved by *Goldoni*, without some capital of industry or talents. The truth is, he is very happy as a portrait painter, and yet happier as a caricaturist. He resembles, in short, the artist who can copy what is before his eyes, but is unable to store his mind with images for future use, or to give them other shape or hue than those in which they are depicted on his organs of sight. If he can copy, he can neither create, imitate, nor compound; if he cannot, however, describe the species, he can, at least, design an individual or a monster.

The Venetian comedies of *Goldoni* are his

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bisogno, all Venetianisms. But these and ten thousand others (for every page would present a similar sample) are small blots in comparison with another defect. It is true that the literary language of Italy delights in a very nice arrangement of words. But *Goldoni*, whenever he wishes to *talk fine*, deals in a perverse style of construction, "vermicular twisting and twining," which neither resembles the march of the cultivated language, nor the inverted style of familiar diction, where the prolocutor, from prevalence of passion, bolts words out of order and place. He deals in a sort of mongrel prose-prosody which, like the giants in Tom Thumb, is like nothing but itself.

best, both because he paints directly from nature, and because he is familiar with the tools which he employs. Of these the most comical are *El Todero Brontolon*, *Le Baruffe Chiozote* and *El Cortesan*. In the latter is a scene, which, if a little more worked up, would have done honour to *Molière*. *El Cortesan*, or the man of the world, sees two men lying in wait for him, whom he suspects to have been posted by a rival for the purpose of bastinadoing him. As there was no avoiding them, he makes up his mind to the encounter, accosts them with familiarity, and after charging them with such a volley of civilities as it was impossible to parry, invites them to dinner. Having, as he imagined, carried the outworks, he now comes to the point, and with the same air of frank goodnature, asks them if they had not been hired by such a one to cudgel him. They admit it; and he, still in the same vein of familiarity, inquires what they were to be paid for their trouble.—"Twenty sequins" was the answer.—"Twenty sequins! Why, I'll give you forty if you'll cudgel *him*."—"Not for the world: twenty sequins is the market price, and Heaven forbid we should raise it upon so noble a gentleman: we'll do it for twenty, sir."—"Well! at any rate you'll beat him, and beat him well."—"Depend upon it, your excellence."

These strokes of drollery are but partial lights. They may, however, illustrate a most compendious description of the character of his works, which has been given by his rival *Carlo Gozzi*, of whom I shall shortly have occasion to speak more at large. He says that, though the Theatre of *Goldoni* does not contain one really good play, it has not one which is destitute of merit, and that it would make an admirable theatrical-thieving-book for whoever had sufficient ingenuity to turn it to account—a prophecy which was accomplished by Foote in his whimsical farce of the Liar.

Goldoni, after having triumphed over the masques, like other conquerors, occasionally enrolled them in his service; but, in his own pieces, he has very seldom employed them with effect. They, however, rallied under a new standard, and enjoyed a short but brilliant triumph under the guidance of the before-mentioned *Carlo Gozzi*, another Venetian. His first experiment, of which I shall now give a short specimen, and which was eminently successful, was entitled THE THREE CHINA ORANGES, a nursery tale, which, contrary to the migratory habits of such stories, has, I believe, hitherto been confined to Italy.

THE THREE CHINA ORANGES.

Silvio, King of Cups, who is dressed like the card-king of that suit, laments to *Pantaloon* the misfortune of his son, *Prince Tartaglia*, who has been for ten years subject to an invincible malady. His physicians considered this as hypocondriac, and had given him over.—He makes this statement weeping aloud. *Pantaloon* deals in ridiculous comments on medicine, and suggests the trial of many favourite receipts of the *charlatans* of the day. The king protests that nothing had been left untried. *Pantaloon* questions him, whether, in his youth, he had never contracted any disorder which he might have transmitted to his son, and for which mercury was the only cure. The king, drawing himself up with an air of majesty, assures him that he had always been TUTTO REGINA. He repeats that the prince's malady was purely hypocondriac, and that the physicians were agreed that *the making him laugh* was the only specific for his complaint. He adds, that this was hopeless, and that the finding himself declined into the vale of years, his only son half-dead, and no successor left him but his niece, the Princess

Clarice,* at once capricious, perverse, and cruel, are subjects of affliction which he has not the courage to bear up against. He laments his subjects, he laments himself, and blubbers yet more boisterously than before. *Pantaloon* attempts to console him, and observes that if the object was to make the prince laugh, he should not make his palace a house of mourning; that he should proclaim feasts and fooleries, and above all things, set at liberty *Truffaldino*, of facetious notoriety; that he had observed the prince to be well disposed towards him; and that, if any body could make him laugh, he was the man. *The king* approves the suggestion, disposes himself to give the necessary orders, and *exit*.

Enter Leander, Knight of Cups,† drest also like the knight on the cards. *Pantaloon* hints, aside, his suspicions of *Leander*'s treachery. *The king* orders *the knight*, who appears to act as his minister, to proclaim balls, banquets, and games of every description, together with a large reward to whoever should succeed in making

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* *Gozzi*, not content with attacking *Goldoni*, here tilts at *Chiari*, a silly and pompous Venetian dramatist of the day. *Clarice* is a caricature of his favourite style of heroines.

† Literally the horse of cups. It is a mounted figure which corresponds, in power, with our queens.

Tartaglia laugh. *Leander* attempts to dissuade *the king* from his purpose, observing that such measures were more likely to aggravate his malady. *Pantaloon*, however, persists in his opinion, and *the king* confirms his commands.

Leander, left alone, meditates on the various obstacles, which appear to oppose his designs. He remains full of doubts and apprehensions. Enter to him the Princess *Clarice*.—This lady having promised, on the death of her cousin *Tartaglia*, to marry *Leander*, and thus raise him to the throne, upbraids him for waiting the prince's death by so slow a disease as that of hypocondria. *The knight* justifies himself by the necessity of caution, observing that the *Fata Morgana*, (Morgue the fay,) his protectress, had given him certain charms in Martellian* verse, to be administered to *Tartaglia* in *panada*, and that these, by their melancholy monotony, must necessarily act upon him as a slow poison.

It is here necessary to observe that the *Fata Morgana* (in Italian mythology, the fairy of

* *Gozzi* here *cannons* upon *Goldoni* and *Chiari*, who had both written in Martellian verse. The invention of this metre, more heavy and pompous than our Alexandrine, is, I believe, attributed to a certain *Martelli*, of Bologna, who flourished about a century ago.

riches) was an enemy to the *King of Cups*, from having lost large sums of money upon his picture.* For equivalent reasons she was the friend and protectress of *the knight*. She lived in a lake, near the capital of Cups. A negress called *Smeraldina*, her slave, acted as a go-between to herself and *Leander*.

The scene in the mean time continues between the knight and *Clarice*. The latter is furious at the slowness of the mischief brought to bear upon *Tartaglia*, and *Leander* himself is infected by her impatience; he begins to mistrust the efficacy of the *Martellian* verses, and is discouraged by the sudden appearance of *Truffaldino*, a fellow whom nobody could look at without laughing.

Here *Gozzi* means to draw a comparison between the effects of the serious comedies of *Goldoni* and *Chiari*, represented by the charms in Martellian verse, and those of the extemporary comedy figured in *Truffaldino*, one of its favourite masques. The *moral* is, that the former are grand causes of melancholy, and the latter its antidote.

Leander dispatches *Brighella* to *Smeraldina*,

* His card.

to demand what is to be inferred from the sudden appearance of *Truffaldino*, and to ask succour from her mistress. *Brighella*, returned from his mission, relates confidentially, that *Truffaldino* was dispatched to court, by a certain *Clelio*, a magician, friend to the King of Cups, for the same sort of reason that had provoked the enmity of *Morgana;* that *Truffaldino* was a specific against Martellian verses, and sent to preserve the king, his heir, and his people from their contagious and delcterious effects.

Here again there is something under the cards, and it is to be observed that the theatrical contests waged by *Goldoni* and *Chiari*, were typified by the hostilities between *Morgana* and *Clelio*. The former was the representative of *Chiari*, the latter of *Goldoni*.

The news brought by *Brighella* produces great confusion in the councils of *Leander* and *Clarice*. They plan various modes of getting rid of *Tartaglia*. *Clarice* suggests arsenic and a blunderbuss; *Leander* opium or *Martellian* verses. *Brighella* here adds, that *Morgana*, hearing of the proposed festivities, had promised to appear and oppose the effects of the prince's possible laugh, by a mortal malediction.

The scene now changes to the sick chamber of *Tartaglia*. He is drest in a ridiculous bed-gown,

and seated in an arm-chair, leaning on a table loaded with pills, powders, and spitting-pots. He laments himself in a feeble voice, and makes a long recapitulation of his miseries. This melancholy monologue is interrupted by the appearance of *Truffaldino*, who begins his attacks upon the hypocondria of the prince. He appears well inclined to *Truffaldino*, but cannot be made to laugh. He *will* talk about his symptoms, and insists upon having *Truffaldino*'s opinion. The latter broaches several absurd medical theories. At last, on examining the prince's spitting-pot, he discovers fragments of purulent *Martellian* verses. While this is going on, a symphony is heard, a signal that the sports are about to begin in the court-yard of the palace. *Truffaldino* wants to decoy the prince into a balcony to look at them. *He* protests that the exertion is impossible. This gives rise to a ridiculous contest. At length *Truffaldino*, out of all patience, tosses pills, powders, and gallypots out of the window; throws the prince, screaming and protesting, over his shoulders, and carries him off, by main force, into the balcony.

The scene, changed to the palace-court, is opened by *Leander*, who states that he has executed the royal orders, and that the populace is in masquerade and about to enter; but that he

has taken the precaution to scatter certain sour-visaged undertaker-like-looking fellows, drest in black, amongst the crowd, who, he trusts, may be capable of counteracting the mirth-moving qualities of *Truffaldino*. *The king* and court, with *Tartaglia*, extravagantly wrapt up, appear at the balcony. The populace enters, and an absurd tourney takes place under the direction of *Truffaldino*, who, commanding all sorts of ridiculous manœuvres, looks up, at the execution of each, to know whether *Tartaglia* laughs; but the poor prince howls and complains of the cold—the air freezes him, the noise distracts him, and he entreats that he may be conveyed to a warm bed. In the mean time the populace run to provide themselves at two fountains, one of which spouts wine and the other oil. *Morgana*, under the disguise of an old woman, ridiculously accoutered, resorts with her pitcher to one of these. *Truffaldino*, after playing her all sorts of absurd tricks, succeeds in tripping her up, and throws her heels over head. At this sight *Tartaglia* bursts into a shout of laughter, and is cured of all his ills. But *Morgana*, recovering her feet and her courage, instantly hurls at him the following malediction in *Martellian* verse.

" Mark me, thou misty *Tartaglia,* mark, moon-calf, bewildered in wonder,
And let the vext tones of my voice go home to thy entrails in thunder.
As where Brenta flows, the hawser tows the barge to its due destination,
So by the nose, thro' heats and snows, be led by my incantation.*
I finish and fasten my curse by calling on Pluto and Pindar,†
Fall in love with the three China oranges, go pluck them or burn to a cinder:
Or perish in striving to pluck, though mail'd out of Mulciber's smithy;
So hence, in the name of ill-luck, go, dog, and the devil go with ye."

The prince instantly feels the effect of the curse, and enters into a transport of passion for the THREE ORANGES. After a ridiculous contest with the King of Cups, he proceeds upon the adventure. At this crisis of his fate, *Clelio,* in whom was typified *Chiari,* under the shape of a

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* *Gozzi,* perhaps in imitation of his models, has occasionally varied the metre of his Martellian verse, introducing some redundant rhyme and rattle.

† There appears at first sight but an alliterative connection between these worthies. But *Chiari,* it seems, was fond of dragging in Pindar, neck and shoulders.

magician, determines to assist him, and calls up a devil for this purpose. The devil comes, but cavils at his powers, or rather the form of his evocation, in a few lines, which I also translate.

"Grave sir, I'm come post out of hell, adjur'd by your mighty monition;
But are you a conj'rer indeed, or only a play-house magician?
For, if this conjecture be true, you should deal forth your blessings or curses,
As other stage-conjurers do, in lofty Martellian verses."

Clelio, however, cuts short all discussion by telling the fiend it is his pleasure to speak prose, and to be obeyed. The devil accordingly receives his instructions, and departs.

In the mean time, *Tartaglia* sets out grotesquely armed; *Clelio*'s devil, with a pair of bellows, judiciously applied, wafts him on his way, and

"Prosequitur surgens a puppi ventus euntem."

The remainder of the piece presents a like tissue of extravagancies.

Some empty heads, as Bishop Berkley says, would no doubt be shook at the extract which I have given; but I am willing to hope better of

you, and trust that you will be inclined to apostrophize *Gozzi* in something like the words of Shakspeare: " In sooth, thou wast in very gracious fooling when thou spok'st of Pigromitus, of the Vapians passing the equinoctium of Quembus—'twas very good i' faith."

It will have been remarked that the author, except where he has inserted a few *Martellian* verses, or a stray joke, has merely given the canvass, or rather the outline of the pattern, leaving the rest to be filled up by the actors. These were of the famous *truppa Sacchi*, a company whose reputation is yet fresh in Italy, and of whose extemporaneous acting are recorded more marvels* than ever were ascribed to the histrionic powers of the Admirable Crichton.

The encouragement *Gozzi* received from the

* Such as hysterics, convulsions, and abortions, &c. &c. I recollect that, asking a Venetian if he remembered any sally that could furnish an idea of the colouring given to this piece by the actors, he told me that he recollected but one. I give it as a specimen. Referring to *Tartaglia*'s contest with his father, *Truffaldino* asks him what he could, in a certain case, say to the King of Cups—*Tartaglia* replies " Say—why I should say *ace* to him." It is to be observed that it is usual in Italy to name the card played. The naming the ace therefore, a card superior to the king, was equivalent to *check mate*.

success of *The Three Oranges* was such as led him to pursue the same career, though he struck out a variety in this species of composition. Its principal feature is an attempt to unite the wonderful, the pathetic, and the ludicrous.

The experiment does not appear very judicious. A mixture of the ludicrous and horrible may succeed, the union of the ridiculous and the pathetic never; nor has the author even any claim to originality on this score, though the plea is strongly urged by his admirers. Our countryman, generally known by the name of *Antoine Hamilton*, long ago imagined this chimæra,* and, as far as the thing was feasible, succeeded better than *Gozzi*.

Gozzi is indebted to him not only for his scheme, but even for some of his details.† The only thing in which the Italian is original, is in the form of these pieces, which consist partly of notes for the masques, of whom so much has been said, and partly of scenes in blank verse for his serious personages; but in the last part of his undertaking he has egregiously failed; for he

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* In his *Fleur d'Épine* and his *Bélier*.

† Thus in the *Four Facardins*, one of the means of cure prescribed for *Muslin the Serious* is precisely that of *Tartaglia* in the *Three Oranges*.

is a paltry poet and full of *patavinities*. His strong side is wild and eccentric pleasantry; but, like many clever men, he was a bad judge of his own merits, and advanced other and less justifiable pretensions.

Gozzi had, in certain of his dramatic performances, had various flings at the self-styled philosophers of the age, and having collected his works, published them, with a laboured introduction, in which nothing is more ridiculous than the grave reflexions with which he has prefaced his absurdities, setting forth his claims on the support of those who would maintain the cause of good order; in as much as he had done his best to divert the populace in an innocent manner, without pandaring to their bad propensities, like those who cultivated the regular drama; exulting, with the joy of an inquisitor, over one whose works had been condemned to the flames; and anticipating the return of those good old times when authors were roasted together with their books.

To the aristocracy of Venice, considering what had been the supposed policy of that republic, such an appeal appears not to have been unhappily addressed; but whatever might have been the disposition of the government, we know that it is one thing to find *the ways* and

another *the means* of diverting a populace, who, in such points, usually insist on catering for themselves. The buffooneries of *Gozzi*, backed as they were by bigotry, could not protract the existence of the masques. These, though they have made, as at present, some clumsy attempts at resurrection, may be said to have gone out with the *truppa Sacchi*. We can scarcely, however, conceive that their existence should have been necessarily wound up in that of this celebrated company: for we might justly ask, why the *truppa Sacchi* itself should have perished without succession? since in this, as well as other cases, we should suppose that the production of the article would have been necessarily in proportion to the demand.

The truth is, that the atmosphere of the eighteenth century could not but be fatal to the *Brighellas, Truffaldinos, Tartaglias,* and *Pantaloons;* and the result of the late experiment to resuscitate them, proves the fact. I expected to see the boxes crammed with spectators, anxious for its success; but the pit (there are no galleries, as with us) was the only part of the theatre which was well filled. In truth, that species of wit which a friend happily terms dithyrambic, which triumphs, in part, through its boldness, and deals in eccentric flights and strange asso-

ciations, is little calculated for an age vulgarized by business, and overlaid with languages and literature—an age which suspends its laugh till it is satisfied with the sufficiency of the cause, and, wanting to try every thing by some recognized measure, would guage a jest with all the severe precision of our excise-laws. Who believes that Rabelais who, born away by his wild wit, never gives a thought a full sitting, but, ere he has half-pencilled it off, calls up "another and another and another" of the long file of whimsical ideas which are constantly crowding on his imagination—who believes that this master-spirit of humour, had he lived in these times, would have found spectators to enjoy the quick shifting scenes of his marvellous magic lantern? I do not mean, however, to insinuate that the precise character of the present age excludes other species of wit. To borrow an image from archery, I should say, that *he* may be sure of applause, who sends his arrows neatly sharpened and nicely feathered, point blank to the butt; but he, who hopes a prize, must never deal in *roving shafts*.

After bestowing so much attention on these comic poets, I shall hardly appear to you to run out of the course, if I say something of the works of the great tragedian *Vittorio Alfieri*. This man seems to have built his reputation

with materials which one should have hardly thought likely to succeed in Italy. The scheme of his plays, at least, appears too simple and severe to please a people so imaginative and so fond of the picturesque. It is clear that the Grecian theatre, itself sufficiently austere, served him as a model, and though it appears, from his life, that he worked from a copy and not from the original, it is true that his tragedies do not savour of the sieve through which they were strained.* But though they suffer no change in this way, under his hands tragedy assumes a yet severer mien. For he discards every species of ornament, while he peoples his stage, like the Grecian, with few characters, and such only as are absolutely necessary to the development or furtherance of the action; while not a word is said, or thing done, which does not directly and ostensibly bear upon it. Working on these

* It is sometimes, however, objected to Alfieri that he has much of the French theatre. The reproach appears to me unfounded, even as to plays where he has treated the same subjects. Amongst other essential points it may be observed, that the French theatre is all passion and has no character; but Alfieri's personages exhibit both passion and character—whether that character is happily imagined or *nicely* maintained is another question.

principles, he has indeed admirably forged his characters. He forces his metal into fusion, or hardens it to the last degree of obduracy; but, during the process, no sparks are ever scattered from his anvil. It is true that his system is admirably calculated to force attention, and we are necessarily hurried away by a torrent which flows in so narrow and so precipitous a channel. At the same time, however, it excludes all the graces of poetry, and many of the nicer delicacies of sentiment. Above all things, it excludes what I will venture to term all parenthesis of passion. By this I mean those insulated traits of feeling, arising out of something not directly incidental to the action, but often highly illustrative of the character of those who are engaged in it. Thus, for instance, the direct lamentations of Lear have less of nature than those provoked by the touch of some string which vibrates with a corresponding chord in the breast of the sufferer. We may take as an instance of this, the reflexions awakened by the storm or the barking of the dogs.

Indeed the strongest contrast to the system of *Alfieri* which exists, is probably to be found in this tragedy, which abounds in beautiful poetry, and has a stage crowded with dramatis personæ, many of which do not seem to be necessary to the conduct of the piece; yet never poet ac-

complished better than the author of this play all the objects which *Alfieri* proposed to himself at the expense of so much that was valuable. I believe, indeed, there are few who will refuse their assent to what has been said by the best of his commentators: "There is, perhaps," observes Dr. Johnson in speaking of Lear, "no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed, which so much agitates our passions, and interests our curiosity. There is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress, or the conduct of the action, and scarce a line which does not conduce to the progress of the scene."

As to the exclusion of poetry from the stage, so rigorously proscribed by *Alfieri*, we may ask, whether this is to be considered as drapery, which in every instance impedes the action or encumbers the motions of the tragic muse? For an answer we might recur to the English tragedy already cited. Whilst the poetry in which it abounds, sheds an air of dignity and grace about the sorrows of Lear, it surely serves equally to exhibit the intensity of his passion. Let us take another instance. There are few plays more full of beautiful poetry than that of Romeo and Juliet; and what could more admirably colour the principal character which is painted

in it? Do not the exquisite flights in which Romeo indulges, give the most lively idea of the sort of sublimated love, with which he is transported? In short, could Shakspeare's idea of him have been given but in poetry, or in other poetry than that which often savours of the lyric?

I have said that all *Alfieri*'s characters are strongly delineated; but though the outline is sharp and masterly, there is not only no colour; there is little light and shade in his designs. In his works we seek in vain touches of the sentimental or the picturesque, qualities which are so generally found united, that we may almost say that the absence of the one necessarily implies that of the other.*

The truth is, that never man set up for a poet with so small a capital as *Alfieri*, or was so

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* Every one, who has at all examined the least visible part of the machinery, by which poets and orators work upon our passions, must be convinced that some of their most pathetic effects are usually produced, either openly or covertly, through the picturesque. But we may go farther, and say that, in some authors, as in Dante, the picturesque and the sentimental are reciprocally productive of each other. The first position scarcely requires illustration; for the second, could the mild but mournful colouring of evening be more admirably given than in the well known lines,

Era già l'ora, &c. &c.?

entirely blinded as to the extent and quality of his stock in trade. Ambitious, high-minded, and restless, he seems to have fancied that strong feelings (which he has however doubtlessly exaggerated*) were sufficient to make a poet; ignorant that if strong feeling be wanting to the receipt, it is strong feeling, acting through the imagination, which is necessary to the constitution of one.

After all, his mode of composing, such as he has himself described it, will serve to explain the cause of his beauties as well as his defects. He never seems to have known what it was

> "To feed on thoughts which, voluntary, move
> Harmonious numbers."

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* One should naturally suppose, from the manner in which he speaks of his comparatively most intimate friend, that he had lived with him on affectionate and familiar terms. Yet, in reality, such was the coldness of their communication, that they never emerged from the formality of the third person; but (to put in Italian what I cannot word in English) *si davano sempre del lei.*

Who but must imagine from his sonnet on his mother, and the terms in which he speaks of her in his Life, that he felt the gratitude and affection to which she had such claims? After their very early separation he saw her, I believe, but once, though he often passed through Piedmont going to and fro between Tuscany and France, and such a visit would have carried him but a few miles out of his way!

Casting and re-casting, copying and re-copying, condensating and cutting down, may not his operations, both in the process and result, be likened to those of the distiller, who reduces the wine on which he works to a concentrated and ardent spirit, that remains however without colour, flavour, or perfume?

LETTER XXXI.

On the Theatres of Italy, &c.

Venice, November, 1817.

From the works which formed the subject of the preceding letter to the composition of the theatres, where they are represented, is a natural transition. But of the performers in the extemporary comedy I have already spoken; I shall confine myself, therefore, to what relates to those in pieces of a more regular constitution. The composition of the various theatrical corps is very unfavourable to these, and may be reckoned among the many second causes which have impeded the growth and progress of the Italian drama.

In Venice, and every other city of the Peninsula, there is an abundance of theatres, the management of which is undertaken by individuals, who recruit, how they can, and often at very small bounties, from almost every province. To say nothing of the bad recitation of these performers, and the slovenly manner in which they learn their parts, (in whatever cause these

originate,) the effect of this system is, in some degree, what would be the consequence of a dramatic conscription from our various counties in Great Britain. Let an Englishman, therefore, conceive a Hamlet soliloquizing in broad Yorkshire, and he may guess at the feelings of a Florentine on hearing, as I have heard, the lyrical effusions of a David from Bergamo.* It is true that the Italians are very indulgent, as to accent, but I have heard as strong disgust expressed in Florence at the barbarous pronunciation of Milan, as those amongst us,

> —— "who have been knoll'd to church
> And sate at good men's feasts,"

experience at the *whine* of Devonshire, or the *burr* of Northumberland.

As the declamation is inferior to that of our

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* The bergamasque accent is necessarily associated with *Truffaldino*, a native of the province where it is spoken.

I was once informed by a Florentine, that some grand duke had succeeded in raising a theatrical corps in Tuscany, and that this not being able to recruit itself within the dukedom, was renewed from other provinces, when the Florentines, disgusted by a pronunciation to which they had been for some time strangers, used at first to repeat after the new comers the words they uttered, as they conceived they ought to be pronounced.

own stage, so is the costume and machinery. The only superiority is in the picturesque. Here, as usual, Italian genius is pre-eminent, and neither the theatres of France nor England can vie with those of this peninsula in the department of scenery.

As to their notions of *costume*, I cannot give you a better idea of this, than by telling you I saw in one and the same evening, a Venetian senator with a foreign order, a pale-faced Othello habited as a Turk, our prince Hal in a Spanish dress, and Poins in a round hat, blue coat and silk stockings.

But if the composition and equipment of the theatrical corps in Italy, as well as perhaps the nature of the language, (of which more hereafter,) is unfavourable to the cultivation and enjoyment of dramatic poetry, it must be allowed that these theatres recommend themselves, as a pleasant place of resort, by their cheapness and other advantages, and seem indeed to be considered principally in this light by the Italians. As a proof of this, I should observe that the post of honour in a box reserved for the lady, is not that from which she can have the best view of the stage, but that from which she can be best seen by the audience; and that ladies pay visits to one ano-

ther in their boxes, where they occasionally make little suppers: so that though the principal object of a theatre is not obtained, its absence is, in some degree, compensated by advantages of another description. In London, the evils are perhaps equal, and counterbalanced by no advantages. In order to get a place in theatres, in which you can neither see nor hear, you dine early, and pay dear; you break the first process of digestion, and moreover have to go dressed. Nor is this the end of your miseries—arrived there, there is usually a difficulty about seats, but should these be obtained, and "quietly held and enjoyed," you sit cramped and crowded, heated and dazzled, till midnight, and then return, under some difficulty and danger, with the pleasing certainty of a reversionary head-ach. In Italy, the price is low, and, what is more important, the theatres are cool, and only lighted sufficiently for convenience and stage-effect, the latter of which is destroyed by our mode of illumination; you may go drest how you will, and at what hour you choose, with no more inconvenience than is incurred by passing from one house to another.

In short, the theatres may illustrate national character in Italy and England. The watch-words of the two countries appear to be—in,

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Italy, *ease at home and abroad;* in England, *comfort at home.* Hence it is perhaps that, sure of it *there*, we never think of looking for it in any other place. Is an Italian cold?—he runs into sunshine: does he seek distraction?—he resorts to spectacles and society. The Englishman must stir his fire, and fall back upon himself.

END OF VOL. I.

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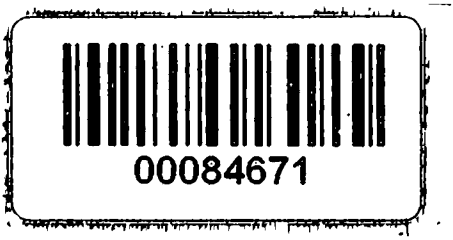
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